"The Pathfinder" of 21st Century Socialism —Hugo Chávez

THE NECESSITY of SOCIAL CONTROL

István Mészáros
Foreword by John Bellamy Foster

The Necessity of Social Control

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The Necessity of Social Control

by István Mészáros

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Foreword

by *John Bellamy Foster*

ISTVÁN MÉSZÁROS IS ONE of the greatest philosophers that the historical materialist tradition has yet produced. His work stands practically alone today in the depth of its analysis of Marx's theory of alienation, the structural crisis of capital, the demise of Soviet-style post-revolutionary societies, and the necessary conditions of the transition to socialism. His dialectical inquiry into social structure and forms of consciousness—a systematic critique of the prevailing forms of thought—is unequaled in our time. No less a historical figure than Hugo Chávez referred to him as the "pathfinder" of twenty-first century socialism.[1]

The present book grew out of a conversation that he and I had in July 2013 in London, in which I expressed the need for an easily accessible work that would provide a way into his thinking for the uninitiated. He took this challenge seriously, resulting in the book before you. The role of the present foreword is to help to put his system of thought as a whole, and this book in particular, in their historical contexts, while illuminating some of the distinctive concepts governing his analysis.

Marx, Lukács, and Mészáros

MARX'S *ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL Manuscripts of 1844*—discovered in the late 1920s but only becoming widely known decades later—was unquestionably the most widely discussed and influential philosophical work to appear in the twentieth century. For the first time the full philosophical roots of Marx's system became evident—in ways that challenged the whole history of philosophy up to that time, along with the roots of the prevailing social order. [2] At the same time the

discovery of Marx's early writings raised entirely new intellectual challenges for social theory. Among these were comprehending the much deeper relation between the Hegelian and Marxian philosophical traditions that these works made evident.

It was Georg Lukács—whose monumental *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) had provided the most influential interpretation of the dialectical relation between the Hegelian and Marxian systems, but whose outlook was to be transformed by his subsequent encounter with Marx's early manuscripts—who responded most radically to this challenge, delving deeply into Hegel's philosophy, out of which Marx's theory of alienation had emerged. The result was *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics* (1966).[3] Here Lukács focused on how critical analysis of the logical categories of classical political economy had led to the genesis of Hegel's system, separating him from his predecessors, such as Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Hegel recognized from the beginning that the dominant philosophical concepts of the Enlightenment were in the main *reified* expressions (that is, abstracted from their material basis and given an artificial, ideal life of their own) of the underlying production and exchange relations of bourgeois society. It was this recognition that lay behind the extraordinary importance that Hegel gave to the concept of alienation in his philosophy.[4]

Hegel's idealist philosophy thus took on a more comprehensive form than that of any of his predecessors within German idealism. What Kant had previously characterized as insurmountable antinomies were seen in Hegel's philosophy as manifestations of a contradictory historical process, in which the various mediations between the material and ideal, subjective and objective, particular and universal were revealed and superseded—but only at the level of thought. Here the inalienable truths of Enlightenment philosophy were given their ultimate justification: as the unfolding of reason (the absolute spirit) in history.

Marx's theory of alienation represented his rebellion against the Hegelian system.[5] In Marx's materialist dialectic, it was theoretically mediated material practice (praxis) associated with a given mode of production or social formation that lay at the root of social change. He thus explored the progressive alienation of labor and production in materialist terms, seeing this as the basis of the logic of capital, emanating from capital's expropriation of the means/conditions of production. Marx, like Hegel, saw modern philosophical categories as reified expressions of the alienated economic relations of capitalist class society.[6] However, in contradistinction to Hegel, he sought to transcend this alienated world, not by providing an idealist reconciliation of subject/object within the realm of thought, but through revolutionary praxis.

As Lukács's assistant and younger colleague (until he departed for the West after the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary), Mészáros was to continue the exploration of

what Lukács had called the "relations between dialectics and economics" in Hegel and Marx. This was most evident in his *Marx's Theory of Alienation* (1970)—a work unsurpassed on its subject, for which he was to receive the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize. It was here in the process of elucidating Marx's entire philosophical system that Mészáros first envisioned the regime of capital as what he was subsequently to call a "social metabolic system." This was prefigured in Marx's hitherto neglected treatment of capital as an alienated form of the labor process, defined dialectically as the social metabolism between human beings and nature.[7]

According to Mészáros's interpretation of Marx's theory of alienation and its relation to his overall critique of political economy, *capital as a system* perfects and universalizes what in previous class systems were mere partial tendencies. It seizes upon and alienates humanity's distinctive role as the "self-mediating being of nature," turning this essential human relation into a means of class oppression by removing workers from control of the means of production, thus severing their direct connection to nature and their own labor.[8] On this basis, the logic of capital is extended to the reproduction of the social relations in their entirety and to the relation to the environment, creating a self-generating, self-reinforcing social order, unlike any that had preceded it. And as its history has shown, this social order exhibits remarkable social cohesion. But the capital system achieves this cohesion only by means of "antagonistic second-order mediations" (the nuclear family, alienated labor/production, civil society, the state, etc.) generating various vicious circles.[9] The result is the growth of social chasms and crises that the logic of the system carries to the *n*th degree, bringing to the fore at last its own absolute limitations.

It was this overall viewpoint, already present in nascent form in *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, that led Mészáros to his theory of "the global structural crisis of capital"—referred to in the preface to the third (1971) edition of his book.[10] In his January 1971 Deutscher Prize Memorial Lecture, "The Necessity of Social Control," published as a separate volume that same year (see chapter 1 below), Mészáros emerged as one of the first major social theorists to put the relation of "Capitalism and Ecological Destruction" at the very forefront of the burgeoning contradictions of the system—ahead of the Club of Rome's famous 1972 study on *The Limits to Growth*. Going against the general tenor of the time, he declared that the proposition of "the *universal* adoption of the American pattern of 'high mass-consumption' within the space of one single century," as then advanced by the economist Walt Rostow, author of *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), was not only impossible—given the reality of imperialism—but was all the more absurd since this outlook "could not be bothered with making the elementary, but of course, necessary, calculations which would have shown . . . that in the event of the universalization of

that pattern . . . the ecological resources of our planet would have been exhausted well before the end of that century several times over" (27).

Nor could science and technology, Mészáros insisted, dispose of capitalism's ecological contradictions, since the fundamental environmental problem stemmed from the logic of capital itself, geared to infinitive quantitative economic expansion, and thus in antagonistic relation to any truly sustainable pattern of development. This critical standpoint was already evident in nascent form in *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, where Mészáros had written of "the intensity of *pollution* that menaces the very existence of mankind" due to the "alienated form of productive capacity" constitutive of the capital system. The capitalist organization of the natural sciences inherently led to the "intensified 'alienation of nature'—*e.g. pollution*."[11]

Central to Mészáros's entire critique was an understanding of the waste, artificial scarcity, irrationality, and destruction characterizing monopoly-capital's increasingly globalized production. As he declared in his 1971 Deutscher lecture:

> Another basic contradiction of the capitalist system of control is that it cannot separate "advance" from *destruction*, nor "progress" from *waste*—however catastrophic the results. The more it unlocks the powers of productivity, the more it must unleash the powers of destruction; and the more it extends the volume of production, the more it must bury everything under mountains of suffocating waste. The concept of *economy* is radically incompatible with the 'economy' of capital production which, of necessity, adds insult to injury by first using up with rapacious wastefulness the *limited resources* of our planet, and then further aggravates the outcome by *polluting and poisoning* the human environment with its mass-produced waste and effluence. (49–50)

Equally important was "the intensification of the rate of exploitation" associated with the "world system of monopoly capitalism" and the growing inability to find new ways of displacing this contradiction through imperialist expansion. Increasingly, the fault lines of capitalism were worldwide. A core manifestation of this was "the growing *equalization* of the differential rates of exploitation as the *global trend* of development of world capital" (45–47). Here he frequently referred to a "downward equalization" from the standpoint of the wages of the workers, and thus a race to the bottom in the world as a whole.[12] This view articulated by Mészáros in the early 1970s is similar to that recently advanced by Ernesto Screpanti in *Global Imperialism and the Great Crisis*, in which Screpanti argues that over the longrun there is a worldwide tendency toward "a convergence of labor costs," resulting "in an international leveling to the bottom, that is, in a maximization of global exploitation."[13] The result, however, is to

intensify capitalism's overall economic contradictions, which can no longer be abated by means of imperialism and war.[14]

No less crucial to Mészáros's argument was the necessity of a system of divided states that dominated over and enforced the conditions of capitalist reproduction, and the impossibility therefore of anything like a system of global governance even as the conditions of accumulation were increasingly globalized. The closest to such governance was the rule of the United States as the current hegemonic power, reinforced by the more frequent recourse to wars and military interventions. An organized capitalism, however, remained beyond reach, due to the competition between states, the rivalry of global monopolies, the ever-increasing levels of exploitation (and inequality) worldwide, and the alienation of all of life by means of capital's second order mediations. As Mészáros stated in *The Work of Sartre* (1979, 2012), the seeming stability of "advanced capitalism," able to remake human needs to fit its own commodity objectives—and thus seemingly eliminate its internal contradictions—was a phantasm, since in reality the "mode of social metabolic reproduction finds itself in its [productively] *descending phase of historical development*, and therefore . . . only *capitalistically* advanced but in no other sense at all." It was "capable of sustaining itself only in an ever more *destructive* and therefore ultimately also *self-destructive* way" leading to new, more absolute revolutionary imperatives.[15] The question then became simply what was the "Archimedean point" by which a socialist transcendence of "labour's self-alienation" (under the aegis of capital) could be effected, and a new era of conscious planning by the associated producers be introduced, in line with *the necessity of social control*.[16]

Beyond Capital (1995)

MÉSZÁROS WAS TO DEVOTE his main efforts in the quarter century after the completion of *Marx's Theory of Alienation* to writing his magisterial *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (1995).[17] Around a thousand pages long in small print, this great work (parts of which are incorporated into the present book) is so complex as to defy easy summary. Nevertheless, the enormous departure in outlook that it represented and some of its key conceptual categories can be mapped here, in ways that will help the reader to navigate the present book and Mészáros's work as a whole.

The predominant tendency on the left in the era of neoliberal globalization dominated by monopoly-finance capital has been one of acceding reluctantly to capital's rule—accepting the proposition that there is no alternative to capitalism. In this respect, Mészáros's *Beyond Capital* stood out, as Daniel Singer was to write in 1996, in

that it presented "the opposite message: What must be abolished is not only classical capitalist society but the reign of capital as such. Indeed, the Soviet example proves it is not enough to 'expropriate the expropriators' if you do not uproot the domination of labor on which the rule of capital rests. An alternative exists, or more precisely, can be forged, provided it is radical and fundamental."[18]

At the center of Mészáros's analysis of the structural crisis of capital and the possibility of socialist transition are three radical theoretical innovations drawn from Marx's intellectual legacy: (1) the conception of the "capital system"; (2) the notion of "social metabolic control" and reproduction; and (3) the idea of "second order mediations."

In the first of these conceptual innovations Mészáros follows Marx in engaging in a critique of *capital*, rather than *capitalism* (a term that Marx hardly ever used.) The crucial problem is then the logic of capital, and not primarily the institutional order of market capitalism. The rule of capital for Mészáros means the dominance of the capital-labor relation, or the systematic accumulation of surplus labor, and can only be understood in these terms. The capital system in general is thus a system based fundamentally on the alienation of labor, rooted in the systematic expropriation of human powers and the estrangement of human needs.[19]

Viewing the capital system as the embodiment of the logic of capital emerging out of the capital-labor dialectic has three major implications for the theory of the transition to socialism (often lost if the focus is on capitalism as an institutional order):

1. A revolution that overcomes some of the main institutional forms of capitalism, including the private ownership of the means of production and the nexus of state and market, is nonetheless incomplete, insofar as it does not supersede the capital relation itself. It thus continues to operate according to the fundamental logic of the capital system, even if property has been socialized and the state is given sole command of the society as in the Soviet Union.
2. The struggle against the logic of capital can be fought and important battles (but not the war) won within the formal institutional domains of a capitalist society itself, making the actualization of revolutionary socialist politics—a genuine movement toward socialism—strategically viable within capitalist boundaries (without a "storming of the Winter Palace") but only insofar as this means a wholesale struggle against all aspects of the capital relation and the progressive substitution of an alternative organic mode of social control within the pores of the existing society.
3. In all cases of revolutionary struggle the goal must be to supersede the second order mediations and reified ideological structures that constitute the system's

> alienated existence. The revolutionary object is never simply to displace one of these or seize merely a part of the system—the commanding heights of the state, for example—but to transcend the alienated capital-labor metabolism altogether, creating a society of substantive equality.

The last of these implications requires that the state, as the top-down mechanism for the enforcement of the capital relation, and the command center of the system, "wither away" to be replaced progressively by communal structures. A new horizontal division of labor needs to be accompanied by the self-organized coordination of labor in society as a whole, and by the collective determination of needs. This necessitates that the socialist system be rooted in its own organic microcosms. In the Soviet Union, in contrast, the state remained in charge, standing in for the collective capitalist. The Bolshevik revolution was thus only partial and ultimately self-contradictory. In Mészáros's terms the October 1917 revolution overthrew capitalism without going on to dislodge the capital system. Labor remained proletarianized. In the end Soviet-style post-revolutionary society did not so much "collapse" as simply recede back into a classical capitalist institutional pattern for which it retained a close affinity.[20]

The second key conceptual innovation introduced is closely related to the first, and involves envisioning the capital system as a form of "social metabolic control" or reproduction.[21] Here Mészáros draws both on Marx (who had written of the "social metabolism" of capital rooted in an alienated productive relation to nature), and on the later Lukács who employed the metabolism concept in his analysis of the dialectics of nature.[22] The same critical approach is evident in recent work by Marxist ecologists, who, following Marx, have emphasized the metabolic rift inherent in the capitalist mode of production.[23]

For Mészáros the capital system is a metabolic, or organic, order capable of its own reproduction, but only as long as the "command structure" of the state is intact. "Without the emergence of the modern state," he writes, "capital's spontaneous mode of metabolic control cannot turn itself into a system with clearly identifiable … socio-economic microcosms. The particular socioeconomic reproductive units of capital taken separately are not only *not capable* of spontaneous coordination and totalization but *diametrically opposed* to it if allowed to follow their disruptive course."[24] Thus, while capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction is based on alienated labor, a hierarchal class system, competition, and an unlimited accumulation imperative, it nevertheless requires for its internal cohesion the existence of a superstructural state apparatus. Altogether the capital system can be seen as a form of "*self-reinforcing reciprocity*" in which its various second order mediations, including the state, hold it together despite its alienating, destructive, and anarchic nature.[25]

This leads to Mészáros's third key conceptual innovation, that of "second order mediations" (see chapter 3). The "primary mediation" at the basis of all social existence is the productive relation "between human beings and the vital conditions of their reproduction, nature" (68).[26] In alienating this fundamental relation capital simultaneously introduces various antagonistic second order mediations (i.e., mediations of the primary mediation), such as: (1) the estranged nuclear family; (2) alienated labor/production; (3) the fetishism of commodities; (4) money (the cash nexus); (5) repressive state formations; and (6) the world market. All of these second order mediations "reciprocally sustain one another." Hence, "it is impossible to counter the alienating and paralyzing force of any one" of these capitalist second-order mediations "taken in isolation." Any attempt to overcome any one of them partially and separate from the others will inevitably fail. "Accordingly, what must be confronted and overcome by the adversaries of the established, incorrigibly discriminatory, order of social metabolic reproduction is not only capital's positively self-sustaining force of surplus-labour extraction but also the devastating negative power—the apparently forbidding inertia—of its circular linkages." This is why Mészáros argues that "the real target of radical socialist transformation must be the capital system as such, *with all of its second order mediations*" (70).[27] Moreover, just as the revolution against the capital system requires the overcoming of all of its alienated second order mediations constituting the basis of its social metabolic reproduction, so must an alternative system of social metabolic reproduction seek to establish its own—in this case unalienated—forms of reciprocal exchange (based on the communal exchange of use values).

These considerations contributed to Mészáros's theory of transition. Drawing metaphorically on a storey of house renovations carried out by Goethe's father (in his attempt to circumvent a local law that said that only one story of a house could overhang the ground floor), Mészáros explains that revolutionary change is "conceivable only as a form of transitional restructuring . . . of material mediations":

> As in the case of Goethe's father (even if for very different reasons), it is not possible to pull down the existing building and erect a wholly new edifice in its place on totally new foundations. Life must go on in the shored-up house during the entire course of rebuilding, 'taking away one storey after another from the bottom upwards, slipping in the new structure, so that in the end none of the old house should be left.' Indeed, the task is even more difficult than that. For the decaying timber frame of the building must be also replaced in the course of extricating humankind from the perilous structural framework of the capital system.[28]

Socialist transition, Mészáros thus argues, requires the creation of an alternative system of communal production, social consumption, and collective control: a whole new structure that must be built floor by floor from the ground up while living in the house itself, and replacing the rotten capitalist building materials.

Such conceptions were to influence Hugo Chávez in his implementation of the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela. Mészáros had singled out Chávez in *Beyond Capital,* while the latter was still in prison and before he ran for president, as the most revolutionary new leader in Latin America, already deeply committed to substantive equality.[29] It was on the basis of Mészáros's theory of socialist transition in *Beyond Capital* that Chávez (with the intervention of Michael Lebowitz) was to develop his powerful conception of "the elementary triangle of socialism," encompassing social ownership of production, worker control of production, and consumption based on communal needs.[30] The idea was to create an entire, self-reinforcing social metabolic order dedicated to human needs and substantive equality. The creation of the famous communal councils in Venezuela and the system of mutually beneficial exchange of use values instituted by the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) were both partly inspired by Mészáros's *Beyond Capital*, which was seen as the basis of a socialism for the 21st century.

The Structural Crisis of Capital

MÉSZÁROS'S *BEYOND CAPITAL* ORIGINATED, as we have seen, as a response to the structural crisis of capital of our age. Few, if any, thinkers have contributed as much to the understanding of the accelerating global contradictions of capital, and the unprecedented dangers that lie ahead in the new millennium. The permanency attributed to the present capital system, Mészáros declares, is entirely false, while the system's "unalterable *temporality*" is increasingly evident.[31] Change on a vast scale is inevitable, presenting itself as a choice of *Socialism or Barbarism*.[32] However, Mészáros sometimes qualifies this by adding "barbarism if we are lucky"—pointing to the possibility, if the train wreck represented by capital is not stopped, of the effective annihilation of the species, not just civilization.[33]

The structural crisis of capital arises from the fact that "no global system can be other than explosive and ultimately self-destructive if it is antagonistically structured all the way to its inner core."[34] The severe impasse in capital's mode of social metabolic control "sets in when the established order of socioeconomic reproduction collides with the obstacles made by its own dualistic articulation, so that the threefold contradiction between production and control, production and consumption, and

production and circulation cannot be any more reconciled, let alone used as powerful engines in the vital expansion and accumulation process."[35] Hence, the system begins to run into its own absolute limits, evident in proliferating crises, once its further quantitative expansion is impeded.

Today the capital system is no longer confined to a small corner of the globe, but has achieved a "global ascendancy," taking over the entire world (and increasingly the planet itself), while confronting a "closing circle." Under these circumstances—those of "the descending phase of development" of the system—the destructive tendency, always present in capital's expansion, comes to predominate, overwhelming its remaining creative aspects. The former process of displacing its contradictions to other parts of the world (the historic role played by imperialism) is no longer possible to the same extent. The necessary command structure of the state increasingly breaks down in the context of a global system of accumulation, which it can no longer control due to the impossibility of forging a coherent global capitalist state.[36]

These contradictions are most powerfully expressed in Mészáros's treatment of "the activation of capital's absolute limits" (chapter 4).[37] Here in an analysis of the outer limits of the system, conditioned by its own internal organization, he demonstrates how the globalized production and accumulation characteristic of the age of monopoly-finance capital undermine the traditional nation-state system, and the possibility for the orderly maintenance of hegemonic power on the part of the United States, which must increasingly resort to its full coercive power—only to confront in the end widening geopolitical threats to its rule.

The planetary ecological crisis meanwhile represents "the destruction of the conditions of social metabolic reproduction" as the system irredeemably fouls its own nest.[38] Here too the future of humanity is placed in question, as a result of the capital system's increasingly destructive second order mediations. "Neither the degradation of nature nor the pain of social devastation," Mészáros writes, "carries any meaning at all for its system of social metabolic control when set against the absolute imperative of self-reproduction on an ever-extended scale. This is why in the course of historical development capital not simply *happened* to fatefully overreach itself on every plane—even in its relationship to the basic conditions of social metabolic reproduction—but was *bound* to do so" and in planetary terms.[39]

In addressing the activation of capital's absolute limits, Mészáros—in line with the famous proposition of Fourier that the emancipation of women is the measure of human emancipation in general—argues that the irrepressible demands for gender equality have stripped the veils away and exposed the utter inability of the capital system to provide substantive equality. A society of full emancipation, run on the principle of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

(Bolívar's equality is "the law of laws") is absolutely inconceivable under the rule of capital.[40] The best that such a system can provide is an empty formal equality, which it substantively undermines at every point, and more visibly so as the crisis intensifies. The diversity of "identities" is used to divide labor within itself and thereby becomes a vital tool for the preservation of the alienated system. The absence of substantive equality is in fact "the common denominator and vitiating core of all social relations under the present system."[41]

Finally, in accord with Marx's absolute general law of capital accumulation, Mészáros points to the chronic unemployment (accompanied by the systematic and growing underutilization of capital) that is affecting the entire capital system: both core and periphery, making *precariousness* the leading characteristic of labor in our time. In this way he highlights the inevitability of today's Great Crisis.[42]

A key element of Mészáros's analysis of the global structural crisis is his thesis that we have entered "the potentially deadliest phase of imperialism" (see chapter 6). The vain efforts of the United States to maintain global supremacy and to establish itself as a surrogate global government (with the help of its European and Japanese allies, which are subordinated to its rule) are now threatening the entire world. "The onset of capital's structural crisis in the 1970s has produced important changes in the posture of imperialism" (110). This is what made it necessary to adopt an increasingly belligerent stance—one of perpetual war ideologically justified by a totalistically defined and yet indistinguishable, and therefore unconquerable, "terroristic" enemy, crossing all national and international boundaries and limits: at once everywhere and nowhere. It is the inherent dangers of this situation, associated with the rise of "surveillance capitalism" and ultimately uncontrollable war—inevitably engendering major conflicts between nation-states themselves—that most directly raises the inescapable question of *Socialism or Barbarism* in our time.[43] Similar dangers, he reminds us, are connected to the continual calls for "humanitarian interventions." aimed at shoring up the imperial system (200).

The financialization process emanating from the economic stagnation of the core accumulation process under monopoly-finance capital adds to the growing structural crisis of the system, which is rapidly degenerating from within, while presented with insurmountable obstacles from without. The system is incapable of expansion based simply on productive investment, but must rely now on various props, such as the sales effort, militarism, and most recently financialization, in order to achieve a putative economic growth that is more and more wasteful and illusory, rooted in debt-leveraged speculation. The result is the rise of a financially fragile, debt-ridden system, one characterized by the highest levels of inequality that the world has ever seen (see chapter 5).[44]

The Historical Moment and the Actualization of Radical Politics

Central to Mészáros's revolutionary critique is the need today for the *maximal radicalism* in social/class movements. This calls for a popular "alternative to parliamentarianism"—or to the current established order of electoral representation through which the mass of the people are periodically called upon to ratify their own subordination in the name of a false "democracy" (see chapter 9). Here he emphasizes that capital itself "is the *extra-parliamentary force* par excellence" and hence can only be radically confronted by a "politics capable of *matching capital's extra-parliamentary powers* and modes of action" (185, 192). This means the building of an extra-parliamentary movement able to confront capital's control of production and civil society as well as the state. Basing his analysis here on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (and Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*), Mészáros harbors no illusions with regard to the common left notion of a war of civil society (as presently constituted) on the state. "The adoption of such a position," he writes, "can only result in being trapped by a very naïve conception of the nature of 'civil society' itself and by a totally uncritical attitude toward a great multiplicity of NGOs which, belying their self-characterization as 'Non-Governmental Organisations,' happen to be well capable of happily coexisting with the dominant retrograde state institutions on which they depend for their financial existence"—drawing as well on the financial support of capital.[45]

Rather than accepting "the line of least resistance" and attempting to conform to the limits set by the system, it is vital, Mészáros therefore insists, to take advantage of the historical moment resulting from the crisis-induced breach in the established order in order to promote a determined "socialist offensive." Such an offensive should seek to prolong the moment of radical politics by transforming the terrain of political action: "turning *fleeting time* into *enduring space*" and fusing "the power of political decision-making with the social base from which it has been alienated for so long."[46] Here Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution and the current "movement toward socialism" in much of Latin America provide evidence of the speed with which a radical offensive can shift the whole terrain of struggle.

Global action is possible (he argues in chapter 10) through the creation of a New International, modeled on the diversity of perspectives that characterized the International Working Men's Association under Marx, while rejecting the attempts in all subsequent Internationals—the Second, Third, Fourth, etc.—to reduce the movement to a mechanical "doctrinal unity."[47] Revolutionary political struggles require a determined, global assault on the capitalist state, and its withering away, in the sense of the rapid transfer of political power to the social base of society, rooting it in communal structures.

In the initial stage of a revolution the struggle is necessarily aimed at the hostile state of the capital system and at capital's extra-parliamentary power, and thus takes a predominantly negative form. But even then the movement must proceed toward its positive goal—for which, collective, socialist education is necessary—of going beyond the state and its top-down structures of control, and effecting a general social transformation, aimed at the creation of alternative structures of control rooted in new, socialist socioeconomic microcosms.[48]

Mészáros's work has its most directly philosophical expression in his major, two-volume study of *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, the most systematic critique we have of modern liberal thought, interrogating all of its methods and forms from a critical-dialectical perspective.[49] He shows by this means the continuity of bourgeois thought, the external parameters of which are determined by the dominant order to which it seeks to conform and to justify. At the same time, he introduces us to the "radical openness of history" and the dialectical process of critical reason which will allow us to find our way out of the capitalist maze. "The question of historically sustainable transition to a radically different form of social metabolic control," he explains, "is not an *abstract theoretical postulate*" but a dynamic necessity: one which rejects all alienated second order mediations and seeks to reestablish an organic human community through the associated producers rationally organizing their metabolic relation to nature. The "epochal change" required to bring this about is *the only viable alternative for humanity* in the face of the present runaway train to disaster.[50]

"The most precious lesson" Mészáros offers, Daniel Singer declared,

> is the confrontation between two fundamentally opposed "metabolisms." The rule of capital is presented as an integrated system, including all sort of features built over time. The socialist project must be equally comprehensive. All its gains cannot be reached at once, but the movement will have to embark on its journey with such a vision. And the attack on the hierarchical division of labor as well as the withering away of the state will have to start from the very beginning, if a new historic attempt is not to be thwarted like its predecessors. What remains to be found is the passage from theory to praxis, the solution to the old socialist dilemma: How do you mobilize people within the framework of the existing society, while providing answers that take you beyond its confines?[51]

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1. The Necessity of Social Control

IN THE DEEPLY MOVING final pages of one of his last works Isaac Deutscher wrote:

> The technological basis of modern society, its structure and its conflicts are international or even universal in character; they tend toward international or universal solutions. And there are the unprecedented dangers threatening our biological existence. These, above all, press for the unification of mankind, which cannot be achieved without an integrating principle of social organization. . . . The present ideological deadlock and the social status quo hardly serve as the basis either for the solution of the problems of our epoch or even for mankind's survival. Of course, it would be the ultimate disaster if the nuclear super-powers were to treat the social status quo as their plaything and if either of them tried to alter it by force of arms. In this sense the peaceful coexistence of East and West is a paramount historic necessity. But the social status quo cannot be perpetuated. Karl Marx, speaking about stalemates in past class struggles, notes that they usually ended "in the common ruin of the contending classes." A stalemate indefinitely prolonged and guaranteed by a perpetual balance of nuclear deterrents, is sure to lead the contending classes and nations to their common and ultimate ruin. Humanity needs unity for its sheer survival; where can it find it if not in socialism.[1]

Deutscher concluded his work by passionately stressing: "De nostra re agitur"—it is all our own concern. Thus it seems to me right to address ourselves on this occasion to some of the vital problems that stood at the center of his interest toward the end of his life.

All the more so because the "status quo" in question is a historically unique status quo: one that inevitably involves the *whole* of mankind. As we all know from history, no status quo has ever lasted indefinitely, not even the most partial and localized ones. The permanence of a *global* status quo, with the immense and necessarily expanding dynamic forces involved in it, is a contradiction in terms: an absurdity that should be visible even to the most myopic of game theorists. In a world made up of a multiplicity of conflicting and mutually interacting social systems—in contrast to the fantasy world of escalating and de-escalating chessboards—the precarious global status quo is *bound* to be broken for certain. The question is not "whether or not," but "by what means?" Will it be broken by devastating military means, or will there be adequate social outlets for the manifestation of the rising social pressures that are in evidence today even in the most remote corners of our global social environment? The answer will depend on our success or failure in creating the necessary strategies, movements, and instruments capable of securing an effective transition toward a socialist society in which "humanity can find the unity it needs for its sheer survival."

1.1 The Counter-Factual Conditionals of Apologetic Ideology

WHAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING today is not only a growing polarization—inherent in the global structural crisis of present-day capitalism—but, to multiply the dangers of explosion, also the breakdown of a whole series of safety valves that played a vital part in the perpetuation of commodity society.

The change that undermined the power of consensus politics, of the narrow institutionalization and integration of social protest, of the easy exportation of internal violence through its transference to the plane of mystifying international collisions, etc., has been quite dramatic. For not so long ago the unhindered growth and multiplication of the power of capital, the irresistible extension of its rule over all aspects of human life, used to be confidently preached and widely believed. The unproblematic and undisturbed functioning of capitalist power structures was taken for granted and was declared to be a permanent feature of human life itself, and those who dared to doubt the wisdom of such declarations of faith were promptly dismissed by the self-perpetuating guardians of the bourgeois hegemony of culture as "hopeless ideologists," if not much worse.

But where now are the days when one of President Kennedy's principal theorists and advisers could speak about Marx and the social movements associated with his name in terms like these:

> He [Marx] applied his kit-bag to what he could perceive of one historical case: the case of the British takeoff and drive to maturity; . . . like the parochial intellectual of Western Europe he was, the prospects in Asia and Africa were mainly beyond his ken, dealt with almost wholly in the context of British policy rather than in terms of their own problems of *modernization*. . . . Marx created *a monstrous guide to public policy*. [Communism] is a kind of disease which can befall a transitional society if it fails to organize effectively those elements within it which are prepared to get on with the job of modernization. [In opposition to the Marxist approach the task is to create] in association with the non-Communist politicians and peoples of the preconditions and early takeoff areas [i.e., the territories of neocolonialism] a partnership which will *see them through* into sustained growth on a political and social basis which keeps open the possibilities of progressive democratic development.[2]

These lines were written hardly a decade ago, but they read today like prehistoric reasoning, although—or perhaps because—the author is a professor of Economic History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In this short decade we were provided with tragically ample opportunity to see in practice, in Vietnam and in Cambodia, as well as in other countries, the real meaning of the program of "partnership" intended "to see the politicians of the early takeoff areas through" to the disastrous results of such partnership,[3] under the intellectual guidance of "Brain Trusts" which included quite a few Walt Rostows: men who had the cynical insolence to call Marx's work "a monstrous guide to public policy." Inflated by the "arrogance of military power," they "proved," by means of tautologies interspersed with retrospective "deductions," that the American stage of economic growth is immune to all crisis,[4] and they argued, with the help of counter-factual conditionals, that the break in the chain of imperialism was merely an unfortunate mishap that, strictly speaking, should not have happened at all. For

> if the First World War had not occurred, or had occurred a decade later, Russia would almost certainly have made a successful transition to modernization and rendered itself invulnerable to Communism.[5]

We might be tempted to rejoice at the sight of such a level of intellectual power in our adversaries, were it not terrifying to contemplate the naked power they wield in virtue of their willing submission to the alienated institutions that demand "theories" of this kind so as to follow, undisturbed even by the possibility of an occasional doubt, their blind collision course. The hollow constructions that meet this demand of

rationalization are built on the pillars of totally false—and often self-contradictory—premises such as, for instance:

1. Socialism is a mysterious—yet easily avoidable—disease which will befall you, unless you follow the scientific prescription of American modernization.
2. Facts to the contrary are merely the result of mysterious—yet easily avoidable—mishaps; such facts (e.g. the Russian Revolution of 1917) are devoid of an actual causal foundation and of a wider social-historical significance.
3. Present-day manifestations of social unrest are merely the combined result of Soviet aspirations and of the absence of American partnership in the societies concerned; therefore, the task is to checkmate the former by generously supplying the latter.

THEORIES RESTING ON SUCH foundations can, of course, amount to no more than the crudest ideological justification of aggressive American expansionism and interventionism. This is why these cynical ideologies of rationalization have to be misrepresented as "objective social and political science" and the position of those who "see through" the unctuous advocacy of "seeing the politicians of the early takeoff areas through"—by means of the "Great American Partnership" of massive military interventions—must be denounced as "nineteenth-century ideologists."

The moment of truth arrives, however, when the "mishaps" of social explosion occur, even more mysteriously than in the "early takeoff areas," in the very land of "supreme modernization" and higher than "high mass-consumption"—namely in America itself. Thus not only is the model of undisturbed growth and modernization shattered but, ironically, even the slogan of "sustained growth on a political and social basis which keeps open the possibilities of progressive, democratic development" ideologically backfires at a time when outcries against the violation of basic liberties and against the systematic disenfranchising of the masses is on the increase. That we are not talking about some remote, hypothetical future but about our own days, goes without saying. What needs stressing, however, is that the dramatic collapse of these pseudo-scientific rationalizations of naked power marks the end of an era: not that of "the end of ideology" but of the end of the almost complete *monopoly* of culture and politics by anti-Marxist ideology successfully self-advertised up until quite recently as the final supersession of all ideology.

1.2 Capitalism and Ecological Destruction

A DECADE AGO THE Walt Rostows of this world were still confidently preaching the *universal* adoption of the American pattern of "high mass-consumption" within the space of one single century. They could not be bothered with making the elementary, but of course necessary, calculations that would show them that in the event of the universalization of that pattern—not to mention the economic, social and political absurdity of such an idea—the ecological resources of our planet would be exhausted well before the end of that century several times over. After all, in those days top politicians and their Brain Trusts did not ride on the bandwagon of ecology but in the sterilized space-capsules of astronautical and military fancy. Nothing seemed in those days too big, too far, and too difficult to those who believed—or wanted us to believe—in the religion of technological omnipotence and of a Space Odyssey around the corner.

Many things have changed in this short decade. The arrogance of military power suffered some severe defeats not only in Vietnam but also in Cuba and in other parts of the American hemisphere. International power relations have undergone some significant changes, with the immense development of China and Japan in the first place, exposing to ridicule the nicely streamlined calculations of escalation experts who now have to invent not only an entirely new type of multiple-player chess game but also the kind of creatures willing to play it, for want of real-life takers. The "affluent society" turned out to be the society of suffocating *effluence,* and the allegedly omnipotent technology failed to cope even with the invasion of rats in the depressing slums of black ghettos. Nor did the religion of Space Odyssey fare any better, notwithstanding the astronomical sums invested in it: even the learned Dr. Werner von Braun himself had to link up the latest version of his irresistible "yearning for the stars" with the prosaic bandwagon of pollution (so far, it seems, without much success).

"The God that failed" in the image of technological omnipotence is now revarnished and shown around again under the umbrella of universal ecological concern. Ten years ago ecology could be safely ignored or dismissed as totally irrelevant. Today it must be grotesquely misrepresented and one-sidedly exaggerated so that people—sufficiently impressed by the cataclysmic tone of ecological sermons—can be successfully diverted from their burning social and political problems. Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans (especially Latin Americans) should not multiply at pleasure—not even at God's pleasure, if they are Roman Catholics—for lack of restraint might result in "intolerable ecological strains." That is, in plain words, it might even endanger the prevailing social relation of forces, the rule of capital. Similarly, people should forget all about the astronomical expenditure on armaments and accept sizeable cuts in

their standard of living, in order to meet the costs of "environmental rehabilitation": that is, in plain words, the costs of keeping the established system of expanding waste production well oiled. Not to mention the additional bonus of making people at large pay for, under the pretext of "human survival," the survival of a socioeconomic system that now has to cope with deficiencies arising from growing international competition and from an increasing shift in favor of the parasitic sectors within its own structure of production.

THAT CAPITALISM DEALS this way—namely its own way—with ecology, should not surprise us in the least: it would be nothing short of a miracle if it did not. Yet the exploitation of this issue for the benefit of "the modern industrial state"—to use a nice phrase of Professor Galbraith's—does not mean that we can afford to ignore it. For the problem itself is real enough, whatever use is made of it today.

Indeed, it has been real for quite some time, though of course, for reasons inherent in the necessity of capitalist growth, few have taken any notice of it. Marx, however—and this should sound incredible only to those who have repeatedly buried him as an "irretrievably irrelevant ideologist of nineteenth-century stamp"—had tackled the issue, within the dimensions of its true social-economic significance, more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago.

Criticizing the abstract and idealist rhetoric with which Feuerbach assessed the relationship between man and nature, Marx wrote:

> Feuerbach . . . always takes refuge in external nature, and moreover in nature which has not yet been subdued by men. But every new invention, every new advance made by industry, detaches another piece from this domain, so that the ground which produces examples illustrating such Feuerbachian propositions is steadily shrinking. The "essence" of the fish is its "existence," water—to go no further than this one proposition. The "essence" of the freshwater fish is the water of a river. But the latter ceases to be the "essence" of the fish and is no longer a suitable medium of existence as soon as the river is made to serve industry, as soon as it is polluted by dyes and other waste products and navigated by steamboats, or as soon as its water is diverted into canals where simple drainage can deprive the fish of its medium of existence.[6]

This is how Marx approached the matter in the early 1840s. Needless to say, he categorically rejected the suggestion that such developments are inevitably inherent in the "human predicament" and that, consequently, the problem is how to *accommodate* ourselves[7] to them in everyday life. He already fully realized then that a radical

restructuring of the prevailing *mode* of human interchange and control is the necessary prerequisite to an effective control over the forces of nature that are brought into motion in a blind and ultimately self-destructive fashion precisely by the prevailing, alienated and reified mode of human interchange and control. Small wonder, then, that to present-day apologists of the established system of control his prophetic diagnosis is nothing but "parochial anachronism."

TO SAY THAT "THE COSTS of cleaning up our environment must be met in the end by the community" is both an obvious platitude and a characteristic evasion, although the politicians who sermonize about it seem to believe to have discovered the philosopher's stone. *Of course* it is always the community of producers who meet the cost of everything. But the fact that it always *must* meet the costs does not mean in the least that it always *can* do so. Indeed, given the prevailing mode of alienated social control, we can be sure that it *will not be able* to meet them.

Furthermore, to suggest that the already prohibitive costs should be met by "consciously putting aside a certain proportion of the resources derived from extra growth"—at a time of nil growth coupled with rising unemployment and rising inflation—is worse than Feuerbach's empty rhetoric. Not to mention the additional problems necessarily inherent in increased capitalistic growth.

And to add that "but this time growth will be controlled growth" is completely beside the point. For the issue is not *whether* we produce under *some* control, but under what *kind* of control; since our present state of affairs has been produced under the iron-fisted control of capital that is envisaged, by our politicians, to remain the fundamental regulating force of our life also in the future.

And, finally, to say that "science and technology *can* solve all our problems in the long run" is much worse than believing in witchcraft; for it tendentiously ignores the devastating social embeddedness of present-day science and technology. In this respect, too, the issue is not *whether* we use science and technology for solving our problems—for obviously we must—but whether we *succeed* in radically *changing* their *direction,* which is at present narrowly determined and circumscribed by the self-perpetuating needs of profit maximization.

These are the main reasons why we cannot help being rather skeptical about the present-day institutionalization of these concerns. Mountains are in labor and a mouse is born: the super-institutions of ecological oversight turn out to be rather more modest in their achievements than in their rhetoric of self-justification: namely Ministries for the Protection of Middle-Class Amenities.

1.3 The Crisis of Domination

IN THE MEANTIME, on this plane as well as on several others, the problems accumulate and the contradictions become increasingly more explosive. The objective tendency inherent in the nature of capital—its growth into a global system coupled with its concentration and increasingly greater technological and science-intensive articulation—undermines and turns into an anachronism the social/structural subordination of labor to capital.[8] Indeed, we can witness that the traditional forms of hierarchical/structural embeddedness of the functional division of labor tend to disintegrate under the impact of the ever-increasing concentration of capital and socialization of labor. Here I can merely point to a few indicators of this striking change:

1. The escalating vulnerability of contemporary industrial organization as compared to the nineteenth-century factory. (The so-called wildcat strikes are inconceivable without the underlying economic and technological processes that both induce and enable a "handful" of workers to bring to a halt even a whole branch of industry, with immense potential repercussions.)
2. The economic link-up of the various branches of industry into a highly stretched system of closely interdependent parts, with an ever-increasing imperative for safeguarding the *continuity of production* in the system as a whole. (The more the system is stretched in its cycle of reproduction, the greater the imperative of continuity, and every disturbance leads to more stretch as well as to an ever-darkening shadow of even a temporary breakdown in continuity.) There are increasingly fewer "peripheral branches," since the repercussions of industrial complications are quickly transferred, in the form of a chain reaction, from any part of the system to all its parts. Consequently, there can be no more "trouble-free industries." The age of paternalistic enterprise has been irretrievably superseded by the rule of "oligopolies" and "super-conglomerates."
3. The growing amount of socially "superfluous time" or "disposable time,"[9] customarily called leisure, makes it increasingly absurd, as well as practically impossible, to keep a large section of the population living in apathetic ignorance, divorced from its own intellectual powers. Under the impact of a number of weighty socioeconomic factors the old mystique of intellectual elitism has already disappeared for good. Also, side by side with a growing intellectual unemployment—both potential and actual—as well as a worsening of the cleavage between what one is supposed to be educated for and what one actually gets in employment opportunities, it becomes more and more difficult to maintain the traditionally unquestioning subordination of the vast majority of intellectuals to the authority of capital.

4. The worker as a consumer occupies a position of increasing importance in maintaining the undisturbed run of capitalist production. Yet he is as completely excluded from control over both production and distribution as ever—as if nothing had happened in the sphere of economics during the last century or two. This is a contradiction that introduces further complications into the established productive system based on a socially stratified division of labor.
5. The effective establishment of capitalism as an economically interlocking world system greatly contributes to the erosion and disintegration of the traditional, historically formed and locally varying partial structures of social and political stratification and control, without being able to produce a unified system of control on a worldwide scale. (So long as the power of capital prevails, "world-government" is bound to remain a futurologist pipe dream.) The "crisis of hegemony, or crisis of the State in all spheres" (Gramsci) has become a truly international phenomenon.

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS all these points are about the question of *social control.*

In the course of human development, the function of social control had been alienated from the social body and transferred into capital that thus acquired the power of grouping people in a hierarchical structural/functional pattern, in accordance with the criterion of a greater or lesser share in the necessary control over production and distribution.

But ironically, the objective trend inherent in the development of capital in all spheres—from the mechanical fragmentation of the labor process to the creation of automated systems, from local accumulation of capital to its concentration in the form of an ever-expanding and self-saturating world system, from a partial and local to a comprehensive international division of labor, from limited consumption to an artificially stimulated and manipulated mass-consumption, in the service of an ever-accelerating cycle of reproduction of commodity-society, and from "free time" confined to a privileged few to the mass production of social dynamite, in the form of "leisure," on a universal scale—carries with it a result diametrically opposed to the interest of capital. For in this process of expansion and concentration, the power of control invested in capital is being *de facto* re-transferred to the social body as a whole, even if in a necessarily irrational way, thanks to the inherent irrationality of capital itself.

That the objectively slipping control is described from the standpoint of capital as "holding the nation to ransom," does not alter in the least the fact itself. For nineteenth-century capitalism could not be "held to ransom" even by an army of so-called troublemakers, let alone by a mere "handful" of them.

Here we are confronted with the emergence of a fundamental contradiction: that between an effective loss of control and the established form of control, capital,

which by its very nature can be nothing but control, since it is constituted through an alienated objectification of the function of control as a reified body apart from and opposed to the social body itself. No wonder, therefore, that in the last few years the idea of workers' control has been gaining in importance in many parts of the world.

THE SOCIAL STATUS QUO of not so long ago is rapidly and dramatically disintegrating in front of our very eyes—if only we are willing to open them. The distance between Uncle Tom's Cabin and the beleaguered headquarters of black militancy is *astronomical*. And so are the distances from the depressing working-class apathy of the postwar period to today's, even officially admitted, growing militancy on a worldwide scale; from graciously granted presidential "participation" to the Paris street fights of 1968; from a badly divided and narrowly wage-orientated Italian trade union movement to the unity necessary for the organization of a political general strike; or, for that matter, from the monolithic, unchallenged rule of Stalinism to the elemental eruption of massive popular dissent in Poland, in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, and recently in Poland again. And yet, it did not take anything like light years—not even light minutes—to travel such astronomical distances.

Not so long ago the "scientific" ideology of gradualist "social engineering"—as opposed to the "religious holism" of revolutionary change and socialism—enjoyed an almost completely monopolistic position not only in educational and cultural institutions but also in the antechambers of political power. But, good heavens, what are we witnessing today? The dramatic announcement of the need for a "major revolution" by none other than President Nixon himself, in his recent State of the Union message; followed by the Shah of Persia's warning that he is going to spearhead the "rebellion of the have-nots against the haves."

And Mr. Wilson too, who mysteriously lost the word *socialism* from his vocabulary the very minute he walked through the front door of 10 Downing Street—and it just could not be found, though his entire team of experts and advisers as well as cabinet colleagues were looking for it for almost six years through the powerful spectacles of "pragmatic modernization," supplied completely free of prescription charges—mysteriously found the word again after leaving the Prime Ministerial residence by the back door. Indeed, in one of his public speeches he even cracked a joke about the "Pentagon hunting for communists under the seabed," though at the same time by a slight fit of amnesia forgetting that he was himself fishing for communists under the seamen's bed not that long ago.

President Nixon: a new *revolutionary;* the Shah of Persia: *leader of the world rebellion of the have-nots;* and Mr. Wilson: an indomitable *crusader against the Pentagon's anti-communist crusades.* I wonder what might come next. (I did not have to wonder

for long: only a few days after this lecture was delivered, Mr. Heath—yet another "pragmatic modernizer," of Rolls-Royce fame—hastened to add his name, in the truest spirit of consensus politics, to our illustrious list as a vigorous *champion of nationalization*.)

However, even metamorphoses of this kind are indicative of powerful pressures whose nature simply cannot be grasped through the mystifying personalization of the issues as expressed in hollow concepts like "bridging the credibility gap," "acquiring a new image," etc. The hypothesis that politicians break their promises because they are "devious" and because they "lack integrity," only begs the question, at best. And the suggestion that they change their slogans and catchphrases because "they need to change their image" is the emptiest of the whole range of tautologies produced by the postwar boom of behaviorist and functionalist "Political Science." Concepts of this kind are nothing more than pretentiously inflated rationalizations of the practice of self-advertising through which the advertising media sell their services to credulous politicians. As Mr. Wilson himself can testify: the simple and strictly quantifiable truth is that the psephologist "credibility gap" between this kind of "scientific" electoral victory forecast and the painfully final result of defeat exactly equals the distance between the front door and the back door of 10 Downing Street.

IF THE TONE OF TRADITIONAL politics is changing today, it is because the objective contradictions of our present-day situation cannot be repressed any longer either by means of naked power and brute force or through the soft strangulation supplied by consensus politics. Yet what we are confronted with is but an unprecedented crisis of social control on a world scale, and not its solution. It would be highly irresponsible to lull ourselves into a state of euphoria, contemplating a "socialist world revolution around the corner."

The power of capital, in its various forms of manifestation, though far from being exhausted, no longer reaches far enough. Capital—since it operates on the basis of the myopic rationality of narrow self-interest, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*—the war of each against all—is a mode of control that is a priori incapable of providing the comprehensive rationality of an adequate social control. And it is precisely the need for the latter that demonstrates its dramatic urgency with the passing of every day.

The awareness of the limits of capital has been absent from all forms of rationalization of its reified needs, not only from the more recent versions of capitalist ideology. Paradoxically, capital is now forced to take notice of some of these limits, although of course in a necessarily alienated form. For now at least the absolute limits of human existence—both at the military and at the ecological plane—*must* be sized up, no

matter how distorting and mystifying are the measuring devices of a capitalist social-economic accountancy. Facing the dangers of a nuclear annihilation on one side and an irreversible destruction of the human environment on the other, it becomes imperative to devise practical alternatives and remedies whose failure is rendered inevitable by the very limits of capital, which have now collided with the limits of human existence itself.

It goes without saying, the limits of capital carry with them an approach that tries to exploit even these vital human concerns in the service of profit-making. The lunatic—but, of course, capitalistically "rational"—theories (and associated practices) of an "escalating" war industry as the ultimate safeguard against war have dominated "strategic thinking" for quite some time. And recently we could observe the mushrooming of parasitic enterprises—from the smallest to the largest in size—which all try to cash in on our growing awareness of the ecological dangers. (Not to mention the ideological-political operations associated with the same issues.)[10]

All the same, such manipulations do not solve the issues at stake. They can only contribute to their further aggravation. Capitalism and the rationality of comprehensive social planning are radically incompatible. Today, however, we witness the emergence of a fundamental contradiction, with the gravest possible implications for the future of capitalism: for the first time in human history the unhampered dominance and expansion of the inherently irrational capitalist structures and mechanisms of social control are being seriously interfered with by pressures arising from the elementary imperatives of mere survival. And because the issues themselves are as unavoidable as the contradiction between the need for an adequate social control and the narrow limits of capitalist accountancy is sharp, the necessary failure of programs of short-sighted manipulation—in a situation that demands far-reaching and consciously coordinated efforts on a massive scale—acts as a catalyst for the development of socialist alternatives.

AND THIS IS FAR from being the sum total of the rising complications. The mass production of disposable time mentioned earlier is now coupled not only with expanding knowledge, but also with growing consciousness of the contradictions inherent in the practically demonstrated failures, as well as with the development of new modes and means of communication potentially *capable* of bringing to light the massive evidence for the eruption of these contradictions.[11]

At the same time, some of the most fundamental institutions of society are affected by a crisis never before imagined.

The power of religion in the West has almost completely evaporated a long time ago, but this fact has been masked by the persistence of its rituals and, above all, by

the effective functioning of substitute religions, from the abstract cult of "thrift" in the more remote past to the religion of "consumer sovereignty," "technological omnipotence," and the like, in more recent decades.

The structural crisis of education has been in evidence for a not negligible number of years. And it is getting deeper every day, although its intensification does not necessarily take the form of spectacular confrontations.

And the most important of them all: the virtual *disintegration* of present-day family—this cell of class society—presents a challenge to which there cannot conceivably be formal-institutional answers, whether in the form of "amending the law of trespass" or in some more ruthlessly repressive form. The crisis of this institution assumes many forms of manifestation, from the hippie cults to widespread drug-taking; from the Women's Liberation Movement to the establishment of utopian enclaves of communal living; and from the much advertised "generation conflict" to the most disciplined and militant manifestations of that conflict in organized action. Those who have laughed at them in the past had better think again. For whatever might be their relative weight in the total picture today, they are potentially of the greatest significance without one single exception.

EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT IS THE WAY in which the stubborn persistence of wishful thinking misidentifies the various forms of crisis. Not only are the manifestations of conflict ignored up to the last minute; they are also misrepresented the minute after the last. When they cannot be swept any longer under the carpet, they are tackled merely as *effects* divorced from their *causes.* (We should remember the absurd hypotheses of "mysterious diseases" and of "events devoid of any foundation" mentioned above.)

Characteristically, we find in a recent book on economics, at the foot of a page that calls for "reducing industrial investments in favor of a large-scale replanning of our cities, and of restoring and enhancing the beauty of many of our villages, towns and resorts," the following story:

> The recent electric-power breakdown in New York, obviously to be deplored on grounds of efficiency, broke the spell of monotony for millions of New Yorkers. People enjoyed the shock of being thrown back on their innate resources and into sudden dependence upon one another. For a few hours people were freed from routine and brought together by the dark. Next-door strangers spoke, and gladdened to help each other. There was room for kindness. The fault was repaired. The genie of power was returned to each home. And as the darkness brought them stumbling into each other's arms, so *the*

hard light scattered them again. Yet someone was quoted as saying, "This should happen at least once a month."[12]

The only thing one does not quite understand: why not at least once a week? Surely the immense savings on all that unused electricity would more than cover the costs of a "large-scale replanning of our cities, and of restoring and enhancing the beauty of many of our villages, towns and resorts." Not to mention the supreme benefits inherent in practicing the newfound virtue of unlit-skyscraper-corridor-brotherhood regularly on a weekly basis. For apparently it is not the mode of their social relationships that "scatters people" apart, but the technological efficiency and monotony of "hard light." Thus the obvious remedy is to give them less "hard light" and all the unwanted problems disappear for good. That the production of "hard light" is a social necessity, and cannot be replaced even for the duration of periodic rituals by soft candlelight, is a consideration evidently unworthy of the attention of our champions in romantic daydreaming.

To put it in another way: this approach of wishful thinking is characterized by a curt dismissal of all those expectations the system cannot meet. The representatives of this approach insist, with unfailing tautology, that such expectations are not the manifestation of social and economic contradictions but merely the *effects* of "rising expectations." Thus not only is the challenge of facing up to the *causal foundations* of frustrated expectations systematically evaded, but at the same time this evasion itself is very conveniently "justified," i.e., rationalized.

The fact is, however, that we are concerned here with an internal contradiction of a system of production and control: one that cannot help raising expectations even to the point of a complete breakdown in satisfying them. And it is precisely at such points of breakdown that Quixotic remedies and substitutes are advocated with so much "humanitarian" passion. Up until, or prior to, these points of crisis and breakdown, no one in his right mind is supposed to question the superior wisdom of "cost-effectiveness," "business sense," "technological efficiency," "economic motives," and the like. But no sooner does the system fail to deliver the goods it so loudly advertised the moment before—confidently indicating, prior to the eruption of structural disturbances, its own ability to cater for expanding expectations as the self-evident proof of its superiority over all possible alternative modes of production and social control—its apologists immediately switch from preaching the religion of "cost-effectiveness" and "economic motives" to sermonizing about the need for "self-denial" and "idealism," untroubled not only by their sudden change of course but also by the rhetorical unreality of their wishful "solutions."

Thus beyond the horizon of "artificial obsolescence" we are suddenly confronted with "theories" advocating the planning of artificial power cuts, the production of

artificial scarcity—both material and as an antidote to too much "disposable time," which involves the danger of an increasing social consciousness; of space-solidarity and artificially manipulated suspense, etc. Indeed, at a time of dangerously rising unemployment there are still with us antediluvian "theorists" who wish to counteract the complications arising from a total lack of aim in saturated commodity existence by seriously advocating the production of artificial unemployment and hardship, topping it all with nostalgic speeches about lost religions and about the need for a brand-new artificial religion. The only thing they fail to reveal is how they are also going to devise an artificial being who will systematically fail to notice the grotesque artificiality of all these artificialities.

Once upon a time it suited the development of capitalism to let out of the bottle the genie of a ruthless conversion of everything into marketable commodities, even though this deed necessarily carried with it the undermining and the ultimate disintegration of religious, political and educational institutions that were vital to the control mechanism of class society. Today, however, the status quo would be much better served by a restoration of all the undermined and disintegrating institutions of control. According to our romantic critics everything would be well if only the genie could be persuaded to retire back into the bottle. The trouble is, though, he has no intention whatsoever of doing so. Thus nothing much remains to our romantics except lamenting upon the wickedness of the genie and upon the folly of human beings who let him loose.

1.4 From "Repressive Tolerance" to the Liberal Advocacy of Repression

WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILS to cope with the manifestations of dissent, and at the same time is incapable of dealing with their causal foundations, in such periods of history not only fantasy figures and remedies appear on the stage but also the "realists" of a repressive rejection of all criticism.

In 1957 a gifted young German writer, Conrad Rheinhold, had to flee the DDR where he had run a political cabaret in the aftermath of the Twentieth Congress. After he had some experience of life in West Germany, he was asked in an interview, published in *Der Spiegel,*[13] to describe the main difference between his old and new situation. This was his answer: "Im Osten soll das Kabarett die Gesellschaft ändern, darf aber nichts sagen; im Western kann es alles sagen, darf aber nichts ändern." (In the East political cabaret is supposed to change society, but it is not allowed to say anything; in the West it is allowed to say whatever it pleases but it is not allowed to change anything at all.)

This example illustrates quite well the dilemma of social control. For the other side of the coin of "*repressive* tolerance" is the *"repression* of tolerance." The two together mark the limits of social systems that are incapable of meeting the need for social change in a determinate historical period.

When Marx died in 1883, his death was reported in the *Times* with some delay.[14] And no wonder, for it had to be reported to the London *Times* from *Paris* that Marx had died in *London.* And this, again, illustrates very well our dilemma. For it is easy to be liberal when even a Marx can be totally ignored, since his voice cannot be heard where he lives, thanks to the political and ideological vacuum that surrounds him. But what happens when the political vacuum is displaced by the rising pressure of the ever-increasing social contradictions? Will not, in that case, the frustrations generated by the necessary failure of attending only to the surface manifestations of socio-economic troubles, instead of tackling their causes—will not that failure take refuge behind a show of strength, even if this means the violation of the selfsame liberal values in whose name the violation is now committed? The recent case of another young refugee from the D.D.R.—this time not a political cabaret writer but someone deeply concerned about the degradation of politics to the level of cheap cabaret, Rudi Dutschke—suggests a rather disturbing answer to our question.

The issue is not that of "personal aberration" or "political pigheadedness," as some commentators saw it. Unfortunately it is much worse than that: namely an ominous attempt to bring the political organs of control in line with the needs of the present-day articulation of capitalist economy, even if such an adjustment requires a "liberal" transition from "repressive tolerance" to "repressive intolerance." Those who continue to nurse their illusions in these matters should read their allegedly "impartial" daily somewhat more attentively, in order to grasp the carefully woven meaning of passages like this:

> The harder the liberal university is pressed, the less comprehensive it can *afford* to be, the more rigorously will it have to draw the line, and the more likely will be the *exclusion of intolerant points of view*. The paradox of the *tolerant society* is that it cannot be defended solely by *tolerant* means just as the *pacific society* cannot be defended solely by peaceful means.[15]

As we can see, the empty myths of "the tolerant society" and "the pacific society" are used to describe the society of *"bellum omnium contra omnes,"* disregarding the painfully obvious ways in which the "pacific society" of U.S. capitalism demonstrates its true character by saturation bombing, wholesale slaughter and massacres in Vietnam, and by shooting down even its own youth in front of the "liberal

university"—at Kent State and elsewhere—when it dares to mount a protest against the unspeakable inhumanities of this "tolerant" and "pacific" society.

Moreover, in such passages of editorial wisdom we can also notice, if we are willing to do so, not only the unintended acknowledgment of the fact that this "liberal" and "tolerant" society will tolerate only to the point it can easily *afford* to do so—i.e., only to the point beyond which protest starts to become effective and turns into a genuine social challenge to the perpetuation of the society of repressive tolerance—but also the sophisticated hypocrisy through which the advocacy of *crude* (rigorous) and *institutionalized intolerance* (exclusion) succeeds in representing itself as the liberal defense of society against "intolerant points of view."

Similarly, the advocacy of institutionalized intolerance is extended to prescribing solutions to Trade Union disputes. Another *Times* leader—significantly titled: *"A Battle Line at 10 Percent"*[16]—after conceding that "Nobody knows for sure what the mechanism that causes a runaway inflation is," and after murmuring something about the fate of "some sort of authoritarian regime" which befalls the countries with substantial inflation, goes on to advocate blatantly authoritarian measures:

> What can be done to reverse the present inflationary trend? The first and immediate answer is that the country should recognize the justice of *standing firm*. Anyone in present circumstances who asks for more than 10 percent is joining in a process of self-destruction. Anyone who strikes because he will not accept 15 percent deserves to be resisted with all the influence of society and *all the power of government . . .*[17] *The first thing to do and the simplest is to start beating strikes.* [!!!] The local authorities should be given *total support* [including troops?] in refusing to make any further offer, *even if the strike lasts for months.*

We can see, then, that the *apparent* concern about the (fictitious) danger of "some sort of authoritarian regime"—which is simply declared to be inevitably linked to major inflations—is only a cover for the real concern about protecting the interests of capital, no matter how grave the political implications of "standing firm" against "strikes lasting for months" might be. Thus to formulate the highest priorities in terms of "beating the strikes" is and remains *authoritarian,* even if the policy based on such measures is championed in editorial columns capable of assuming liberal positions on peripheral issues.

From the advocacy of institutionalized intolerance, in the form of "beating the strikes with all the power of government," to the legitimation of such practices, through *anti-union laws,* is, of course, only the next logical step. And the record of consensus politics is particularly telling in this respect.[18] For Mrs. Castle's denunciation

of the Tory anti-union bill is not just halfhearted and belated. It also suffers from the memory of its twin brother—the ill-fated Labour bill—for which she could certainly not disclaim maternity. And when Mrs. Castle writes about *The Bad Bosses' Charter*,[19] she merely highlights the stubborn illusions of "pragmatic" politicians who, notwithstanding their past experience, still imagine that they will be voted back into office in order to write in the statute books a "Charter for the Good Bosses."

From a socialist point of view, bosses are neither "bad" nor "good." Just *bosses*. And *that* is bad enough—in fact it could not be worse. This is why it is vital to go beyond the paralyzing limits of consensus politics which refuses to recognize this elementary truth, and makes the people at large pay for the disastrous consequences of its mounting failures.

1.5 War if the Normal Methods of Expansion Fail

UNDER THE DEVASTATING IMPACT of a shrinking rate of profit that must be monopolistically counteracted, the margin of traditional political action has been reduced to slavishly carrying out the dictates arising from the most urgent and immediate demands of capital expansion, even if such operations are invariably misrepresented as "the national interest" by both sides of the "national" consensus.[20] And just how directly policymaking is subordinated to the dictates of monopoly capital—unceremoniously excluding the vast majority of the elected representatives from the determination of all the important matters—is at times revealed in most unexpected ways by such embarrassing events as the headline-catching resignation of supposedly key decision-makers: some members of the most exclusive "inner cabinets" (restricted to a mere handful of ministers) who protest that they had no say in deciding the crucial issues of their own departments, let alone the national policy as a whole.

Even more revealing is the meteoric rise of the self-appointed representatives of big business and high finance to the top of political decision-making. Given the vital role assigned to the state in sustaining, with all available means at its disposal, the capitalist system of production—at a time of an already enormous but still extending concentration of capital—so much is at stake that the traditional forms of an indirect (economic) control of policymaking must be abandoned in favor of a *direct* control of the "commanding heights" of politics by the spokesmen of monopoly capital. In contrast to such manifestations of actual economic and political developments that we have all witnessed in the recent past and are still witnessing today, the mythology of realizing socialist ideals by "pragmatically" acquiring control over the "commanding heights of a mixed economy" must sound particularly hollow indeed.

Thus politics—which is nothing unless it is a conscious application of strategic measures capable of profoundly affecting social development as a whole—is turned into a mere instrument of short-sighted manipulation, completely devoid of any comprehensive plan and design of its own. It is condemned to follow a pattern of belated and short-term reactive moves to the bewildering crisis events as they necessarily erupt, with increasing frequency, on the socioeconomic basis of self-saturating commodity production and self-stultifying capital accumulation.

The crisis we face, then, is not simply a political crisis, but the general structural crisis of the capitalistic institutions of social control in their entirety. Here the main point is that the institutions of capitalism are inherently violent and aggressive: they are built on the fundamental premise of "war if the 'normal' methods of expansion fail." (Besides, the periodic *destruction*—by whatever means, including the most violent ones—of overproduced capital is an inherent necessity of the "normal" functioning of this system: the vital condition of its recovery from crisis and depression.) The blind "natural law" of the market mechanism means that the grave social problems necessarily associated with capital production and concentration are never *solved,* only *postponed,* and indeed—since postponement cannot work indefinitely—transferred to the *military* plane. Thus the "sense" of the hierarchically structured institutions of capitalism is given in its ultimate reference to the violent "fighting out" of the issues, in the international arena. For the socioeconomic units—following the inner logic of their development—grow bigger and bigger, and their problems and contradictions increasingly more intense and grave. Growth and expansion are immanent necessities of the capitalist system of production and when the local limits are reached there is no way out except by violently readjusting the prevailing relation of forces.

The capitalist system of our times, however, has been decapitated through the removal of its ultimate sanction: an *all-out war* on its real or potential adversaries. Exporting internal violence is no longer possible on the required massive scale. (Attempts at doing so on a limited scale—e.g. the Vietnam War—are no substitutes for the old mechanism and even accelerate the inevitable internal explosions by aggravating the inner contradictions of the system.) Nor is it possible to get away indefinitely with the ideological mystifications that represented the *internal* challenge of socialism: the only possible solution to the present crisis of social control, as an *external* confrontation: a "subversion" directed from abroad by a "monolithic" enemy. For the first time in history capitalism is globally confronted with its own problems that cannot be "postponed" much longer, nor indeed can they be transferred to the military plane in order to be "exported" in the form of an all-out war.

BLOCKING THE ROAD OF a possible solution to the grave structural crisis of society through a third world war is of an immense significance as far as the future development of capitalism is concerned. The grave implications of this blockage can be grasped by remembering that the "Great Wars" of the past

1. automatically de-materialized the capitalist system of incentives, producing a shift from "economic motives" to "self-denial" and "idealism" so dear to the heart of some recent spokesmen and apologists of the system in trouble, and at the same time adjusting, accordingly, the mechanism of "interiorization" through which the continued legitimation of the established order is successfully accomplished;
2. suddenly imposed a radically lower standard of living on the masses of people, who willingly accepted it, given the circumstances of a state of emergency;
3. with equal suddenness, radically widened the formerly depressed margin of profit;
4. introduced a vital element of rationalization and coordination into the system as a whole (a rationalization, that is, which, thanks to the extraordinary circumstances, did not have to be confined to the narrow limits of all rationalization that directly arises from the sole needs of capital production and expansion); and, last but not least:
5. gave an immense technological boost to the economy as a whole, on a wide front.

Current military demand, however massive, simply cannot be compared to this set of both economic and ideological factors whose removal may well prove too much for the system of world capitalism. The less so since present-day military demand—which is imposed on society under "peacetime" conditions and not under those of a "national emergency"—cannot help intensifying the contradictions of capital production. This fact is powerfully highlighted by the spectacular failures of companies which heavily depend for their survival on mammoth defense contracts (Lockheed and Rolls-Royce, for instance).

The issue is, however, far more fundamental than even the most spectacular of failures could adequately indicate. For it concerns the structure of present-day capitalist production as a whole, and not simply one of its branches. Nor could one reasonably expect the state to solve the problem, no matter how much public money is poured down the drain in the course of its revealing rescue operations.

Indeed, the tendency of increasing state interventions in economic matters in the service of capital expansion led to the present state of affairs in the first place. The result of such interventions was not only the cancerous growth of the non-productive branches of industry within the total framework of capital production but—equally

important—also the grave distortion of the whole structure of *capitalist cost-accounting* under the impact of contracts carried out with the ideological justification that they were "vital to the national interest." And since present-day capitalism constitutes a closely *interlocking system,* the devastating results of this structural distortion come to the fore in numerous fields and branches of industry, and not only in those that are *directly* involved in the execution of defense contracts. The well-known facts that original cost estimates as a rule madly escalate, and that the committees set up by governments in order to "scrutinize" them fail to produce results (that is, results other than the whitewashing of past operations coupled with generous justifications of future outlays), find their explanation in the immanent necessities of this changed structure of capitalist production and accountancy, with the gravest implications for the future.

Thus, the power of state intervention in the economy—not so long ago still widely believed to be the wonder drug of all conceivable ills and troubles of the "modern industrial society"—is strictly confined to accelerating the maturation of these contradictions. The larger the doses administered to the convalescing patient, the greater his dependency on the wonder drug, i.e., the graver the symptoms described above as the structural distortion of the whole system of capitalist cost-accounting, symptoms that menacingly foreshadow the ultimate paralysis and breakdown of the mechanisms of capital production and expansion. And the fact that what is supposed to be the remedy turns out to be a contributory cause of further crisis clearly demonstrates that we are not concerned here with some "passing dysfunction" but with a fundamental, dynamic contradiction of the whole structure of capital production at its historic phase of decline and ultimate disintegration.

1.6 The Emergence of Chronic Unemployment

EQUALLY IMPORTANT IS THE newly emerging pattern of unemployment. For in recent decades unemployment in the highly developed capitalist countries was largely confined to "pockets of underdevelopment," and the millions of people affected by it used to be optimistically written off in the grand style of neo-capitalist self-complacency as the "inevitable costs of modernization," without too much—if any—worry about the social-economic repercussions of the trend itself.

Insofar as the prevailing movement was from unskilled to *skilled* jobs, involving large sums of capital outlay in industrial development, the matter could be ignored with relative safety, in the midst of the euphoria of "expansion." Under such circumstances the human misery necessarily associated with all types of unemployment—including the one produced in the interest of "modernization"—could be

capitalistically justified in the name of a bright commodity future for everyone. In those days the unfortunate millions of apathetic, "underprivileged" people could be easily relegated to the periphery of society. Isolated as a social phenomenon from the rest of the "Great Society" of affluence, they were supposed to blame only their own "uselessness" (want of skill, lack of drive, etc.) for their predicament, resigned to consume the leftovers of the heavily laden neo-capitalist dinner table magnanimously dished out to them in the form of unemployment "benefits" and unsaleable surplus-food coupons. (We should not forget that in those days some of the most prominent economists were seriously advocating programs that would have institutionalized—in the name of "technological progress" and "cost-efficiency"—the permanent condemnation of a significant proportion of the labor force to the brutally dehumanizing existence of enforced idleness and of a total dependence on "social charity.")

What was systematically ignored, however, was that the trend of capitalist "modernization" and the displacement of large amounts of unskilled labor in preference to a much smaller amount of skilled labor ultimately implied the *reversal* of the trend itself—namely the breakdown of "modernization," coupled with massive unemployment. This fact of the utmost gravity simply *had* to be ignored, in that its recognition is radically incompatible with the continued acceptance of the capitalist perspectives of social control. For the underlying dynamic contradiction that leads to the drastic reversal of the trend is by no means inherent in the *technology* employed, but in the blind subordination of both *labor and technology* to the devastatingly narrow limits of capital as the supreme arbiter of social development and control.

To acknowledge, though, the social embeddedness of the given technology would have amounted to admitting the socioeconomic limitations of the capitalist applications of technology. This is why the apologists of the capitalist relations of production had to theorize about "growth" and "development" and "modernization" *as such,* instead of assessing the sobering *limits* of *capitalist* growth and development. And this is why they had to talk about the "affluent," "modern industrial"—or indeed "post-industrial"(!)—and "consumer" society as such, instead of the artificial, contradictory affluence of *waste-producing commodity society* which relies for its "modern industrial" cycle of reproduction not only on the most cynical manipulation of "consumer demand" but also on the most callous exploitation of the "have-nots."

Although there is no reason why *in principle* the trend of modernization and the displacement of unskilled by skilled labor should not go on indefinitely, as far as *technology itself* is concerned, there is a very good reason indeed why this trend must be reversed under capitalist relations of production: namely the catastrophically restricting criteria of profitability and expansion of exchange value to which such "modernization" is necessarily subordinated. Thus the newly emerging pattern of

unemployment as a socioeconomic trend is, again, indicative of the deepening structural crisis of present-day capitalism.

In accordance with this trend, the problem is no longer just the plight of unskilled laborers but also that of large numbers of *highly skilled* workers who are now chasing, in addition to the earlier pool of unemployed, the depressingly few available jobs. Also, the trend of "rationalizing" amputation is no longer confined to the "peripheral branches of ageing industry" but embraces some of the *most developed* and modernized sectors of production—from shipbuilding and aviation to electronics, and from engineering to space technology.

Thus we are no longer concerned with the "normal," and willingly accepted, by-products of "growth and development" but with their coming to a halt; nor indeed with the peripheral problems of "pockets of underdevelopment" but with a fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production as a whole that turns even the latest achievements of "development," "rationalization" and "modernization" into paralyzing burdens of chronic underdevelopment. And, most important of all, the human agency that finds itself at the receiving end is no longer the socially powerless, apathetic and fragmented multitude of "underprivileged" people but *all* categories of skilled and unskilled labor, i.e., objectively, the *total labor force* of society.

It goes without saying, we are talking about a major *trend* of social development, and not about some mechanical determinism that announces the immediate collapse of world capitalism. But even though the storehouse of manipulative countermeasures is far from being exhausted, no such measure is capable of suppressing the trend itself in the long run. Whatever might be the rate of success of measures arising from, or compatible with, the basic requirements and limitations of the capitalist mode of production, the crucial fact is and remains that under the present-day circumstances and conditions of capital production the totality of the labor force is becoming involved in an ever-intensifying confrontation with monopoly capital—which carries far-reaching consequences for the development of social consciousness.

1.7 The Intensification of the Rate of Exploitation

HERE WE CAN SEE, again, the vital importance of blocking the road of possible solutions to the structural crisis of capitalism through the violent displacement of its problems in the form of a new world war feasible in the past. Under the changed circumstances some of the most powerful instruments of mystification—through which capital managed to exercise its paralyzing ideological control over labor in the past—become dangerously undermined and tend to collapse altogether. For now

the immense tensions generated within the system of capital production cannot be exported on an adequately massive scale at the expense of other countries, and thus the basic social antagonism between capital and labor that lies at the roots of such tensions cannot be sealed down indefinitely: in the end *the contradictions must be fought at the place where they are actually generated.*

Capital, when it reaches a point of saturation in its own setting and, at the same time, cannot find outlets for further expansion through the vehicle of imperialism and neo-colonialism, has no alternative but to make its own indigenous labor force suffer the grave consequences of the deteriorating rate of profit. Accordingly, the working classes of some of the most developed "post-industrial" societies are getting a foretaste of the real viciousness of "liberal" capital.

The interplay of a number of major factors—from the dramatic development of the forces of production to the erection of enormous obstacles to the unhampered international expansion of monopoly capital—have exposed and undermined the mechanism of the traditional "double book-keeping" that in the past enabled capital to conform to the rules of "liberalism" at home while practicing and perpetuating the most brutal forms of authoritarianism abroad. Thus the real nature of the capitalist production relations, the ruthless domination of labor by capital, is becoming increasingly more evident as a *global* phenomenon.

Indeed, it could not be otherwise. For so long as the problems of labor are assessed merely in *partial* terms (i.e., as *local* issues of fragmented, stratified and divided groups of workers) they remain a mystery for theory, and nothing but cause for chronic frustration for politically minded social practice.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE development and self-reproduction of the capitalist mode of production is quite impossible without the concept of the *total* social capital, which alone can explain many mysteries of commodity society—from the "average rate of profit" to the laws governing capital expansion and concentration. Similarly, it is quite impossible to understand the manifold and thorny problems of nationally varying as well as socially stratified labor without constantly keeping in mind the necessary framework of a proper assessment: namely the irreconcilable antagonism between *total* social capital and the *totality* of labor.

This fundamental antagonism, it goes without saying, is inevitably modified in accordance with:

a) the local social-economic circumstances;
b) the respective positions of particular countries in the global framework of capital production; and
c) the relative maturity of the global social-historical development.

Accordingly, at different periods of time the system as a whole reveals the workings of a complex set of objective differences of interest on *both* sides of the social antagonism. The objective reality of different *rates of exploitation*—both within a given country and in the world system of monopoly capital—is as unquestionable as are the objective differences in the *rates of profit* at any particular time, and the ignorance of such differences can only result in resounding rhetoric, instead of revolutionary strategies. All the same, the reality of the different rates of exploitation and profit does not alter in the least the fundamental law itself: i.e., the growing *equalization* of the differential rates of exploitation as the *global trend* of development of world capital.

TO BE SURE, THIS LAW of equalization is a long-term trend as far as the global system of capital is concerned. Nevertheless, the modifications of the system as a whole also appear, inevitably in the short run, as "disturbances" of a particular economy that happens to be negatively affected by the repercussions of the shifts that necessarily occur within the global framework of total social capital.

The dialectic of such shifts and modifications is extremely complex and cannot be pursued at this place much further. Let it now suffice to stress that "total social capital" should not be confused with "total national capital." When the latter is being affected by a relative weakening of its position within the global system, it will inevitably try to compensate for its losses by increasing its specific rate of exploitation over against the labor force under its direct control—or else its competitive position is further weakened within the global framework of "total social capital." Under the system of capitalist social control there can be no way out from such "short-term disturbances and dysfunctions" other than the intensification of the specific rates of exploitation, which can only lead in the long run, both locally and in global terms, to an explosive intensification of the fundamental social antagonism.

Those who have been talking about the "integration" of the working class—depicting "organized capitalism" as a system that succeeded in radically mastering its social contradictions—have hopelessly misidentified the manipulative success of the differential rates of exploitation (which prevailed in the relatively "disturbance-free" historic phase of post-war reconstruction and expansion) as a basic *structural remedy*.

As a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind. The ever-increasing frequency with which "temporary disturbances and dysfunctions" appear in all spheres of our social existence, and the utter failure of manipulative measures and instruments devised to cope with them, are clear evidence that the structural crisis of the capitalist mode of social control has assumed all-embracing proportions.

1.8 Capital's "Correctives" and Socialist Control

THE MANIFEST FAILURE OF established institutions and their guardians to cope with our problems can only intensify the explosive dangers of a deadlock. And this takes us back to our point of departure: the imperative of an adequate social control that "humanity needs for its sheer survival."

To recognize this need is not the same thing as issuing an invitation to indulge in the production of "practicable" blueprints of socioeconomic readjustment in the spirit of accommodating liberal meliorism. Those who usually lay down the criterion of practicability as the "measure of seriousness" of social criticism, hypocritically hide the fact that their real measure is the capitalist mode of production in terms of which the practicability of all programs of action is to be evaluated.

Practicable *in relation to what?*—that is the question. For if the criteria of capital production constitute the "neutral" basis of all evaluation, then, of course, no socialist program can stand the test of this "value-free," "non-ideological" and "objective" approach. This is why Marx himself, who insisted that men must change "from top to bottom the conditions of their industrial and political existence, and consequently *their whole manner of being,*"[21] must be condemned as a "hopelessly impractical ideologist." For how could men conceivably change from top to bottom the conditions of their existence if conformity to the conditions of capital production remains the necessary premise of all admissible change?

And yet, when the very existence of humankind is at stake, as indeed it happens to be at this juncture of an unprecedented crisis in human history, the only program that is really practicable—in sharp contrast to the counterproductive practicality of manipulative measures which only aggravate the crisis—is the Marxian program of radically restructuring, "from top to bottom," the totality of social institutions, the industrial, political and ideological conditions of present-day existence, "the whole manner of being" of men repressed by the alienated and reified conditions of commodity society. Short of the realization of such unpracticability, there can be no way out from the ever-deepening crisis of human existence.

The demand for "practicable" blueprints is the manifestation of a desire to integrate the "constructive" elements of social criticism: a desire coupled with the determination to devise ruthlessly effective countermeasures against those elements which resist integration, and therefore a priori defined as "destructive." But even if this were not so, truly adequate programs and instruments of social-political action can only be elaborated by critical and self-critical social practice itself, in the course of its actual development.

Thus the socialist institutions of social control cannot define themselves *in detail* prior to their practical articulation. At this point of historic transition the relevant

questions concern their general character and direction: determined, in the first place, by the prevailing mode and institutions of control to which they have to constitute a radical alternative. Accordingly, the central characteristics of the new mode of social control can be concretely identified—to a degree to which this is necessary for the elaboration and implementation of flexible socialist strategies—through the grasp of the basic functions and inherent contradictions of the disintegrating system of social control.[22]

Here we must confine ourselves to mentioning only the most important points—among them the relationship between politics and economics in the first place. As is well known, Marx's bourgeois critics never ceased to accuse him of "economic determinism." Nothing could be, however, further removed from the truth. For the Marxian program is formulated precisely as the *emancipation* of human action from the power of relentless economic determinations.

When Marx demonstrated that the brute force of economic determinism, set into motion by the dehumanizing necessities of capital production, rules over all aspects of human life, demonstrating at the same time the inherently *historical*—i.e., necessarily *transient*—character of the prevailing mode of production, he touched a sore point of bourgeois ideology: the hollowness of its metaphysical belief in the "natural law" of permanence of the given production relations. And by revealing the inherent contradictions of this mode of production, he demonstrated the necessary *breakdown* of its objective economic determinism. Such a breakdown, however, had to consummate itself by extending the power of capital to its extreme limits, submitting absolutely everything—including the supposedly autonomous power of political decision-making—to its own mechanism of strict control.

Ironically, when this is accomplished (as a result of an increasingly bigger appetite for "correctives" devised to safeguard the unhampered expansion of the power of capital), monopoly capital is also compelled to assume direct control over areas it is structurally incapable of controlling. Thus beyond a certain point, the more it controls (directly), the less it controls (effectively), undermining and eventually destroying even the mechanisms of "correctives." The complete and by now overt subordination of politics to the most immediate dictates of capital-producing economic determinism is a vital aspect of this problematic. This is why the road to the establishment of the new institutions of social control must lead through a *radical emancipation of politics from the power of capital.*

ANOTHER BASIC CONTRADICTION of the capitalist system of control is that it cannot separate "advance" from *destruction,* nor "progress" from *waste*—however catastrophic the results. The more it unlocks the powers of productivity, the more it must

unleash the powers of destruction; and the more it extends the volume of production, the more it must bury everything under mountains of suffocating waste. The concept of *economy* is radically incompatible with the "economy" of capital production, which, of necessity, adds insult to injury by first using up with rapacious wastefulness the *limited resources* of our planet, and then further aggravates the outcome by *polluting and poisoning* the human environment with its mass-produced waste and effluence.

Ironically, again, the system breaks down at the point of its supreme power; for its maximum extension inevitably generates the vital need for restraint and conscious control with which capital production is structurally incompatible. Thus the establishment of the new mode of social control is inseparable from the realization of the principles of a *socialist economy* that center on a *meaningful economy of productive activity:* the pivotal point of a rich human fulfillment in a society emancipated from the alienated and reified institutions of control.

AND THE FINAL POINT to stress is the necessarily global determination of the alternative system of social control, in confrontation with the global system of capital as a mode of control. In the world as it has been—and is still being—transformed by the immense power of capital, the social institutions constitute a closely interlocking system. Thus there is no hope for *isolated partial* successes, only for *global* ones—however paradoxical this might sound. Accordingly, the crucial criterion for the assessment of partial measures is whether they are capable of functioning as "Archimedean points," i.e., as *strategic levers* for a radical restructuring of the global system of social control. This is why Marx spoke of the vital necessity of changing "from top to bottom" the conditions of existence *as a whole,* short of which all efforts directed at a socialist emancipation of mankind are doomed to failure. Such a program, it goes without saying, embraces the "micro-structures" (like the family) just as much as the most comprehensive institutions (the "macro-structures') of political and economic life. Indeed, as Marx had suggested, nothing less than a radical transformation of our "whole manner of being" can produce an adequate system of social control.

ITS ESTABLISHMENT WILL, no doubt, take time and will require the most active involvement of the whole community of producers, activating the repressed creative energies of the various social groups over matters incomparably greater in importance than deciding the color of local lampposts to which their "power of decision-making" is confined today.

The establishment of this social control will equally require the conscious cultivation—not in isolated individuals but in the whole community of producers, to whatever walk of life they may belong—of an uncompromising critical awareness, coupled

with an intense commitment to the values of a socialist humanity, which guided the work of Isaac Deutscher to a rich fulfillment.

Thus our memorial is not a ritual remembrance of the past but a persistent challenge to face up to the demands inherent in our own share of a shared task.

It is in this spirit that I wish to dedicate this lecture to the memory of Isaac Deutscher.

2. Marxism Today

2.1 Sartre's Alternative

Radical Philosophy: *You met Sartre in 1957. Why did you decide to write a book on him?* [23]

István Mészáros: I always felt that Marxists owed a great debt to Sartre because we live in an age in which the power of capital is overbearing, where, significantly, the commonplace platitude of politicians is that "there is no alternative," whether you think of Mrs. Thatcher, or Gorbachev, who endlessly repeated the same until he had to find out, like Mrs. Thatcher, that after all there had to be an alternative to both of them. But it goes on and on, and if you look around and think of how Conservative or Labour politicians talk, they always talk about "there is no alternative," and the underlying pressures are felt verywhere. Sartre was a man who always preached the diametrical opposite: there is an alternative, there must be an alternative; you as an individual have to rebel against this power, this monstrous power of capital. Marxists on the whole failed to voice that side. I don't say that you have to become therefore an existentialist or a politically committed existentialist in order to face it, but there is no one in the last fifty years of philosophy and literature who tried to hammer it home with such single-mindedness and determination as Sartre did: the necessity that there has to be a rebellion against the wisdom of "there is no alternative" and there has to be an individual participation in it. I don't embrace his ideas but I embrace the aim. How you realize that aim is up to you in the context of your own approach, but the aim is something without which we won't get anywhere. Sartre today in France is a very embarrassing person even to mention. Why? Because what happened is that in the name of privatism and individualism they have totally sold out to the powers of repression, a capitulation to the forces of "there is no alternative," and that's why

Sartre is a terrible reminder. When you also look into the background of the people we are talking about, "postmodernists" of a great variety, they very often were politically engaged people. But their engagement was skin-deep. Some of these people, around 1968, were more Maoist than the extreme Maoists in China, and now they have embraced the right in a most enthusiastic way; or they were in the "Socialism or Barbarism" group and have become the peddlers of the most stupid platitudes of "postmodernity." What these people have lost is their frame of reference. In France intellectual life used to be dominated in one way or another by the Communist Party. That goes also for Sartre who tried criticizing it from outside and pushing it in a direction he embraced until he had to come to the conclusion that work in collaboration with the Communist Party is both necessary and impossible, which is a terrible, bitter dilemma. He said that at the time of the Algerian War when the role of the Communist Party was absolutely disgraceful. That was what made it necessary, because you need a movement to oppose the repressive force of the state; and impossible, because look what that movement is like. What happened, of course, was the disintegration of the French Communist Party like several other parties of the Third International in the last two decades. And with the sinking of that big ship in relation to which the French intellectuals defined themselves in one way or another, here are these intellectuals left behind: the ship has disappeared and they find themselves in their self-inflated rubber dinghies throwing little darts at each other. Not a very reassuring sight: and they are not going to get out of it by simply fantasizing about some individuality that doesn't exist; because true individuality is inconceivable without a community with which you relate yourself and define yourself.

2.2 Marxism Today

RP: *You have lived in various countries. Why did you settle in England? Surely English culture is not very congenial to your kind of thought?*

IM: Well, I beg to differ because I had actually quite a long relationship to English-speaking culture way before I left Hungary. I had been a great admirer of a certain line of thought, from Hobbes to the great figures of the English and Scottish Enlightenment, and these really meant a hell of a lot to me, because they had a great message for the future and have to be an integral part of your own work. Another reason was that I was always a great admirer of English and Scottish poetry, from Shakespeare to the present. And the third reason which I found equally important is that I always thought of England as the country of the Industrial Revolution which went with a working class

with tremendously deep roots, and that remains despite everything. I think you have to relate yourself to something: political and social commitment cannot be in thin air or in a vacuum. I am deeply committed to the working class, and that is how I think of the future intellectually. Theoretically there must be points of reference: there cannot be social transformation without an agency and the only agency conceivable under the present conditions to take us out of this mess is labor—labor in the sense Marx was talking about and which we have to rediscover for ourselves under our present conditions.

RP: *Your most recent book is* The Power of Ideology. *The last part has some interesting criticisms of Marx. What do we have to rethink in Marx's legacy?*

IM: Well, we have to relate him to his time which does not mean we have to in any way abandon the framework of his theory. The framework of Marxian theory remains the overall horizon also of our activity, our orientation, because it embraces the whole epoch, this epoch of capital in crisis and the necessity of finding a way out of it. However, historical circumstances change and some of the things about which I wrote in *The Power of Ideology* show that he had to take shortcuts. For well over ten years I have tried to draw attention to the passage in which Marx talks about this "little corner of the world," Europe. Europe is after all only a little corner of the world. What is it for us socialists, what is the meaning of it, that capital on a much larger terrain, the rest of the world, not this little corner of the world, is in the ascendant? He decided to put that on the side and proceed from the horizon and perspective of the little corner of the world which Europe was. And that was a conscious choice for him.

RP: *In recent papers on socialist transformation, you have introduced an important distinction between capital and capitalism. Can you explain this distinction and its significance for socialist struggle?*

IM: In fact this distinction goes back to Marx himself. I pointed out several times that Marx didn't entitle his main work "Capitalism" but "Capital," and I also underlined that the subtitle of Volume One was mistranslated under Engels's supervision as "the capitalist production process," when in fact it is "the production process of capital," which has a radically different meaning. What is at stake here, of course, is that the object, the target, of socialist transformation is to overcome the power of capital. Capitalism is a relatively easy object in this enterprise because you can in a sense abolish capitalism through revolutionary upheaval and intervention at the level of politics, the expropriation of the capitalist. You have put an end to capitalism but you have not even touched the power of capital when you have done it. Capital is not

dependent on the power of capitalism and this is important also in the sense that capital precedes capitalism by thousands of years. Capital can survive capitalism, hopefully not by throusands of years, but when capitalism is overthrown in a limited area, the power of capital continues even if it is in a hybrid form.

The Soviet Union was not capitalist, not even state capitalist. But the Soviet system was very much dominated by the power of capital: the division of labor remained intact, the hierarchical command structure of capital remained. Capital is a command system whose mode of functioning is accumulation-oriented, and the accumulation can be secured in a number of different ways. In the Soviet Union surplus labor was extracted in a political way and this is what came into crisis in recent years. The politically regulated extraction of surplus labor became untenable for a variety of reasons. The political control of labor power is not what you might consider an ideal or optimal way of controlling the labor process. Under capitalism in the West what we have is an economically regulated extraction of surplus labor as surplus value. In the Soviet system this was done in a very improper fashion from the point of view of productivity because labor retained a hell of a lot of power in the form of negative acts, defiance, sabotage, moonlighting, etc. As a result one could not even dream of achieving the kind of productivity which is feasible elsewhere. This circumstance undermined the *raison d'être* of the politically forced accumulation under Stalin and his successors. The power of accumulation became stuck and that is why the whole system had to collapse. I published in Italy a long essay in Spring 1982, in which I explicitly stated that, whereas the old U.S. policies for the military-political rollback of communism were not likely to succeed, what was happening in Eastern Europe was likely to lead to the restoration of capitalism. I also found for the same reason the idea of "market socialism" a contradiction in terms, because it would, in a wishful concept, want to wed the two modalities: of the economic extraction of surplus labor with the politically regulated extraction, so that was why it was always a non-starter really.

What is absolutely crucial is to recognize that capital is a metabolic system, a social-economic metabolic system of control. You can overthrow the capitalist but the factory system remains, the division of labor remains, nothing has changed in the metabolic functions of society. Indeed, sooner or later you find the need for reassigning those forms of control to personalities, and that is how the bureaucracy comes into existence. The bureaucracy is a function of this command structure under the changed circumstances where in the absence of the private capitalist you have to find an equivalent to that control. I think this is a very important conclusion, because very often the notion of bureaucracy is pushed forward as a kind of mythical explanatory framework, and it doesn't explain anything. The bureaucracy itself needs explanation. How come this bureaucracy arises? When you use it as a kind of *deus ex machina*

that explains everything in terms of bureaucracy, if you get rid of bureaucracy then everything will be all right. But you don't get rid of bureaucracy unless you attack the social economic foundation and devise an alternative way of regulating the metabolic process of society in such a way that the power of capital at first is curtailed and is of course in the end done away with altogether. Capital is a controlling force, you cannot control capital, you can do away with it only through the transformation of the whole complex of metabolic relationships of society, you cannot just fiddle with it. It either controls you or you do away with it, there is no halfway house between, and that's why the idea of market socialism could not conceivably function from the very beginning. The real need is not for the restoration of the capitalist market under the name of an utterly fictitious social market, but for the adoption of a proper system of incentives. There is no social production system which can function without incentives, and who are the people to whom these incentives have to be related? Not abstract collective entitites but individuals. So if people as individuals are not interested, not involved in the production process, then sooner or later they assume a negative or even actively hostile attitude toward it.

RP: *Are we talking about material incentives?*

IM: It can be both. The opposition between moral and material incentives is often a very rhetorical one, an abstract and rhetorical one, because if the result of this intervention and participation in the social processes is a better production, an increasing productivity, activation of the potentialities of the individuals involved, then it becomes a material incentive. But inasmuch as they are in control of their own life processes, it is also a moral incentive, so the two go hand-in-hand. Material and moral incentives have to go hand-in-hand. It is a question of the control of the processes of this social economic system in which the activation of the repressed potential of the people is also an incentive. Material incentives in our society as presented to us always divide people against one another. You can see this everywhere, in every profession, teaching, university, every walk of life: the incentives work on the presumption that we can divide people against one another in order to control them better; that's the whole process. Now, if you then reverse this relationship and say that people are in control of what they are involved in, then the divisiveness doesn't work any longer because they are not the suffering subjects of that sort of system. So material incentives and moral incentives can also be egalitarian in character. That highlights the tragedy of the Soviet-type of development. When they talk about the collapse of socialism in relation to that, it is a grotesque misrepresentation of the facts, because socialism was not even started, not even the first steps have been taken in the direction of

a socialist transformation whose target can only be to overcome the power of capital and to overcome the social division of labor, to overcome the power of the state which is also a command structure regulating the lives of the people from above.

2.3 Mickey Mouse Socialism

RP: *You talk about challenging the power of capital and I wondered if you could say a bit more about the practical implications, the implications for socialist struggle of your distinction between capital and capitalism.*

IM: First of all, the strategy which you have to envisage has to be spelled out in those terms. Socialists cannot carry on with the illusion that all you have to do is abolish private capitalism—because the real problem remains. We are really in a profound historical crisis. This process of the expansion of capital embracing the globe itself has been more or less accomplished. What we have witnessed in the last couple of decades is the structural crisis of capital. I always maintained that there is a big difference from the time when Marx talked about crisis in terms of the crisis that discharges itself in the form of great thunderstorms. Now it doesn't have to discharge itself in thunderstorms. What is characteristic in the crisis of our time is precipitations of varying intensity, tending toward a depressed continuum. Recently we started to talk about double-dip recession, soon we will talk about triple-dip recession. What I am saying is that this tendency toward a depressed continuum, where one recession follows another, is not a condition which can be maintained indefinitely because at the end it reactivates capital's internal explosive contradictions with a vengeance, and there are also some absolute limits which one has to consider in that respect.

Remember, I am talking about the structural crisis of capital, which is a much more serious problem than the crisis of capitalism; because one way to get out of the crisis of capitalism in principle was a state regulation of the economy, and in some respects on the outer horizon of the Western capitalist system you can allow for its possibility. State capitalism can arise when the Western capitalist system is in deepest trouble, but again I would say it is not a tenable solution in the long run because the same kinds of contradictions are reactivated, namely the contradiction between the political and the economic extraction of surplus labor. I am not talking about fictitious future events. Think of fascism, think of the Nazi system which attempted this kind of corporatist state regulation of the system in order to get out of the crisis of German capitalism at that given time of history. Therefore what we are considering here is that all those ways of displacing temporarily the internal contradictions of

capital are being exhausted. The world as a whole is very insecure. The overwhelming majority of humanity lives in the most abominable conditions. Whatever happened to the modernization of these countries? It has taken such forms of robbery and extraction and mindless refusal to consider even the implications for the survival of humanity—the way in which these territories have been treated—that the whole thing has been totally undermined, and today you find a situation in which nobody believes any more in the modernization of the so-called Third World. And that is why that depressed continuum is, in the long run, an untenable situation and for that reason a social transformation must be feasible. But it is not feasible through the revitalization of capital. It can only be done on the basis of a radical departure from the logic of this accumulation-oriented mindless destructive control.

The tremendous crisis I am talking about saw not only the virtual extinction of the Communist parties, the parties of the Third International, but also the extinction of the parties of the Second International. For about a hundred years those who believed in the virtues of evolutionary socialism and reform were talking about the transformation of society which leads toward socialist relations of humanity. This has gone totally out of the window even in terms of their own programs and perspectives. You have seen recently that the socialist parties of the Second International, and their various associates, have suffered quite devastating setbacks and defeats in every single country: in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Belgium and the Scandinavian countries, and now recently also in England, the fourth successive defeat for the Labour Party. It was quite appropriate that this serial defeat in all these countries coincided with the celebratory opening of Euro-Disneyland, because what these parties themselves have adopted in this historical period, in their response to the crisis, is some kind of Mickey Mouse socialism and this Mickey Mouse socialism is totally incapable of intervening in the social process. That is why it is not accidental that these parties adopt the wisdom of capital as an irreplaceable sytem. The leader of the Labour Party once declared that the task of socialists is the better management of capitalism. Now, this kind of preposterous nonsense is in itself a contradiction. It is a contradiction in terms because it is extremely presumptious to think that the capitalist system would work better with a Labourite government. The problems continue to become more severe, and the political system is incapable of responding because the political system operates under the ever more constraining margins of capital. Capital as such doesn't allow any more margin for maneuver. The margin of maneuver for political movements and parliamentary forces was incomparably greater in the nineteenth century or in the first third of the twentieth century. Britain is already part of Europe and there is no way in which you can unwind that process, in the sense that little England will be capable of solving these problems. But that immediately also raises the question:

How do we relate ourselves to the rest of the world? With what happened in the East, in the Soviet Union? A new fundamental problem has arisen on the horizon. In the case of Russia I have read recently that, in addition to the $25 billion which exist in the form of promises from the West, Russia will need this year alone another $20 billion. Where are we going to find these billions which Russia needs for this process when the American debt is itself quite astronomical? The problems of this world are becoming so intertwined, so enmeshed with one another, that you can't think of partial resolution to them. Fundamental structural changes are needed. The two and a half decades of expansion after the Second World War was followed by deepening malaise, the collapse of the earlier cherished strategies, the end of Keynesianism, the appearance of monetarism, etc., and all of them leading nowhere. When self-complacent people like Prime Minister John Major say "Socialism is dead, capitalism works," we must ask: capitalism works for whom and for how long? I have read recently that the directors of Merrill Lynch received, one $16.5 million, another $14 million, and another ten or fifteen of them $5.5 million each, as annual remuneration. Capitalism works very well indeed for them, but how does it work for the people in Africa, where you see them every day on your television screen? Or in vast areas of Latin America, or in India, or in Pakistan, or in Bangladesh? I could continue and name the countries where you are talking about thousands of millions of people who can hardly survive.

RP: The agent of change in this situation, the revolutionary subject, is still in your view the working class?

IM: Undoubtedly, there cannot be any other. I remember there was a time when Herbert Marcuse was dreaming about new social agents, the intellectuals and the outcasts, but neither of them had the power to implement change. The intellectuals can play an important role in defining strategies, but it cannot be that the outcasts are the force which implements this change. The only force which can introduce this change and make it work is society's producers, who have the repressed energies and potentialities through which all those problems and contradictions can be solved. The only agency which can rectify this situation, which can assert itself, and find fulfillment in the process of asserting itself, is the working class.

2.4 The Problem of Organization

RP: What about its form of organization? Do you think new forms of organization are needed? Some people say the old-style political party is irrelevant.

IM: Yes, I would completely agree with that. The old-style political party is integrated into the parliamentary system which itself has outlived its historical relevance. It was in existence well before the working class appeared on the historical horizon as a social agency. The working class had to accommodate itself and constrain itself in accordance with whatever possibilities that framework provided and consequently it could produce only defensive organizations. All organizations of the working class which have been historically constituted—its political parties and trade unions have been the most important of them—all of them were defensive organizations. They worked up to a point, and that was why the reformist perspective of evolutionary socialism was successful for so many years, because partial improvements could be gained. The working-class standard of living in the G7 countries has risen enormously in this period. When Marx was saying in the *Communist Manifesto* that the working class only has chains to lose, that is certainly not true of the working class of the G7 countries today or even yesterday. They have been very successful in improving their standard of living throughout this historical period until the last decade or so. What happened in the last decade or decade and a half was the coming to an end of this process because capital can no longer afford to grant benefits and significant gains to the working classes. Capital never gave anything away. If it was in tune with its own internal logic of expansion, self-expansion, then those gains could be provided. In fact they became dynamic factors in this self-expansionary process. That is not the case now. That's why we are in the situation that the health service is in crisis, the education system is in crisis, the welfare state as a whole is in crisis. So the historical end of this process reopens the question: if the working class cannot obtain defensive gains any longer, through what strategies can it transform society?

RP: *What I had in mind is more the extra-parliamentary parties like Lenin's Bolsheviks or the Chinese Communist Party which succeeded in destroying capitalism. Are they historically outmoded?*

IM: Yes, completely. Even the vanguard parties remained constrained by the perspective of parliamentarianism, and Lenin himself was in favor of these parties operating within the parliamentary framework. So what is of course an immense problem for the historical agency of transformation is that capital is, by definition, and very effectively in its mode of acting and functioning, an extra-parliamentary force. The extra-parliamentary force of labor would be the trade unions, but the trade unions identified themselves with the reformist parties and that constrained them. There will be no advance whatsoever until the working class movement, the socialist movement, is re-articulated in the form of becoming capable of offensive action, through

its appropriate organizations and through this extra-parliamentary force. The parliament, if it is to become meaningful at all in the future, has to be revitalized, and can only be if it acquires an extra-parliamentary force in conjunction with the radical political movement that can also be active through parliament.

RP: *What do you think of the current state of Marxist philosophy?*

IM: I think Marxist philosophy in general finds itself in a very difficult situation precisely for the reasons we are talking about, because we are in a major historical crisis, and disorientation is the rule of the day and what happened in the East has greatly affected socialists and Marxists in the West and understandably so. It has to go through a process of revaluation and heart-searching and redefinition of all kinds of things. I find the situation in Latin America, for instance, much more interesting, the intellectual ferment which is going on there is much more interesting for the time being than what I could point to here. But I don't think this is a permanent condition, and I am the last to suggest that a radical socialist transformation can come out of these areas alone. In fact, I am paradoxically convinced that the future of socialism will be decided in the United States, however pessimistic this may sound. I try to hint at this in the last section of *The Power of Ideology* where I discuss the problem of universality. Socialism either can assert itself universally and in such a way that it embraces all those areas, including the most developed capitalist areas of the world, or it won't succeed. The world is one. I always rejected the notion of a "Third World": there is only one world. I am convinced that a revival of Marxist thought in the future will also come here in response to the problems and demands of the age, especially when some of the mystifications of the past are swept away. For how much longer can people be fooled with the idea that if they wait long enough, then, through social democratic processes of reform and evolutionary socialism, one day their problems will be solved? I don't think that many people believe this today and there was plenty of evidence in the elections all over Europe that this idea has been profoundly discredited. When parliamentary expectations are bitterly disappointed people move in the direction of taking action. We had a very dramatic case in the recent past with the opposition to the Poll Tax and the defeat of Margaret Thatcher, who was considered permanent, undefeatable, through that process. And now, after the British general election, in Scotland people are talking about direct action, even civil disobedience, in order to assert what they consider to be their legitimate interest of securing their own parliament or even their independence. So these are the kind of social events, social movements, in relation to which Marxist philosophy, Marxist thought in general can redefine itself.

RP: *Presumably what needs to happen is that the workers in the United States form links and make common cause with workers in the Third World. But how can they? These workers are to some extent living on a transfer of value from these same countries.*

This is one of the problems, and that's also where a critique of Marx has to be indicated, because the working class itself is fragmented, is divided; there are so many contradictions. In the United States in the last ten years the standard of living of the working class has gone down. So we are talking about a process, we are not talking about wish objects but realities which are happening in our times. In January 1971 I gave the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, The Necessity of Social Control, and I indicated there the beginning of chronic structural unemployment. Now, unemployment at that time in Britain was well under one million. Today, even after twenty-three times of falsifying the true unemployment figures, it is officially around 2.7 million. And no commitment, even from the Labour Party, to a return to full employment. This is the measure of the changes that are taking place. It is a massive contradiction when you declare a very large portion of the population superfluous. This portion of the population is not going to remain always meek and compliant and resigned to the conditions to which it is condemned. So things are happening, things are changing. But these changes will have to go deeper and I am convinced that they will.

3. Causality, Time, and Forms of Mediation

3.1 Causality and Time under Capital's *Causa Sui*

3.1.1 / THE MOST PROBLEMATICAL ASPECT of the capital system, notwithstanding its incommensurable power as a mode of social metabolic control, is its total inability to *address causes as causes,* no matter how serious their implications in the longer run.[24] This is not a transient phenomenon—historically surmountable—but an irremediable structural dimension of the expansion-oriented capital system that in its necessary remedial actions must seek solutions to all problems and contradictions generated within its framework by adjustments made strictly at the level of *effects and consequences*.

Relative limits of the system are those that can be overcome by progressively expanding the margin and productive efficiency, within the given framework feasible and pursued type, of socioeconomic action, minimizing thereby for the time being the harmful effects that arise from, and are containable by, capital's fundamental causal framework. Approaching the absolute limits of capital, by contrast, calls unavoidably into play the causal framework itself. Consequently, going successfully beyond them would necessitate the adoption of reproductive strategies that sooner or later would undermine altogether the viability of the capital system as such. It is not surprising, therefore, that this system of social reproduction must at all cost confine its remedial efforts to the structurally compatible partial modification of the effects and consequences of its given mode of operation, taking their causal foundation—even under the circumstance[25] of the most severe crises—absolutely for granted.

In relation to capital's mode of social metabolic control—which cannot contemplate the possibility of a future unless the projected future is envisaged as a direct extension of past and present determinations—there cannot be any such thing as

"the longer run." The apologists of capital are fond of quoting the Keynesian wisdom according to which "in the long run we are all dead," as if that kind of frivolous dismissal of concern with the future could settle the matter. The truth, however, is that because of its *necessary nihilation of the future* the capital system is locked into the vicious circle of the short run, although its ideologists try to misrepresent such vice as an unsurpassable virtue. This is the reason why capital is incompatible with any meaningful attempt at comprehensive *planning,* even when the need for it is quite overwhelming in the troubled relations of global capitalist enterprises. And this is why also the Soviet-type capital system, belying all of its explicit claims to the establishment of a socialist planned economy, could only produce a gruesome caricature of planning. Metamorphosing the private capitalist personifications of capital into their variants as Soviet bureaucrats would introduce changes only on the plane of *manipulatable effects,* leaving their historically long established causal foundations unaltered.

The reason why capital is structurally incapable of addressing causes as causes—in contrast to treating all newly arising challenges and complications as more or less successfully manipulatable effects—is because it happens to be *its own causal foundation:* a veritable unholy *causa sui.* Anything that might aspire at socioeconomic legitimacy and viability must be accommodated within its predetermined structural framework. For, as a mode of social metabolic control, capital cannot tolerate the intrusion of any principle of socioeconomic regulation that might constrain its expansion-oriented dynamics. Indeed, expansion as such is not simply a *relative* function—to a greater or lesser extent commendable, and in that light under certain circumstances freely adopted whereas under others consciously rejected—but an *absolutely necessary* way of displacing the capital system's emerging problems and contradictions, in accord with the imperative of avoiding like the plague their underlying causes. The self-propelling causal foundations of the system cannot be questioned under any circumstance. If troubles appear in it, they must be treated as temporary "dysfunctions," to be remedied by reasserting with ever greater rigor the imperative of expanded reproduction. It is for this reason that there can be *no alternative* to the pursuit of expansion—at all cost—in all varieties of the capital system.

So long as the scope for unobstructed expansion is objectively present, the process of displacing the system's contradictions can go on unhindered. When things do not go well, i.e., when there is a failure in economic growth and corresponding advancement, the difficulties are diagnosed in terms of the circular proposition that runs away from the underlying causes and highlights only their consequences by saying that "there is not enough growth." Dealing with problems in this perverse circular way, constantly repeating even at times of major recessions that "everything is in place" for

healthy expansion, creates the illusion that capital's mode of social metabolic control is in no need of fundamental change. Legitimate change must be always envisaged as limited alteration and improvement of what is already given. Change must be brought about by innovation undertaken strictly at the *instrumental* level, which is supposed to make it self-evidently beneficial. Since, however, the necessary historical qualifying conditions and implications of continued expansion are systematically disregarded or brushed aside as irrelevant, the assumption of the permanence and unquestionable viability of capital's *causa sui* is utterly fallacious.

But here again the issue is not the intrusion of a logical fallacy into theory. Rather, it is the unsustainable overturning of actually existing practical relations. For the perverse corollary of the *absolutized relative* (i.e., the limited historical) conditions required by capital's expanded reproduction process—the gratuitously assumed availability forever of both the resources and the scope needed for successful capital expansion—is the irresponsible *relativization of the absolute* constraints (as, for instance, the willful ignorance of the dangers involved in the ongoing dissipation of the planet's unrenewable resources). Instead of dangerously tampering with them, such constraints should be recognized as necessary limiting conditions in any finite system, including all feasible varieties of the capital system, unless one is willing to play Russian roulette with the survival of humanity. Since, however, the acceptance of constraints of this kind would inevitably call for a major change in capital's fundamental causal framework—in that the postulated imperative of expansion would have to be qualified and justified, instead of being used as the allegedly self-evident ground of all conceivable justification, thus itself in absolutely no need of justification—there can be "no alternative" to the relativization of the absolute, no matter how irresponsible.

3.1.2 / THE UNALTERABLE *TEMPORALITY* of capital is *a posteriori* and *retrospective.* There can be no future ahead in a meaningful sense of the term, since the only admissible "future" has already arrived in the form of the existing parameters of the established order well before the question of "what is to be done" is allowed to be raised.

Given its fundamental structural determinations to which everything under the sun must conform, capital's mode of operation can only be *reactive* and *retroactive,* even when the defenders of the system speak—quite inappropriately—of its beneficial "restructuring." In reality nothing is allowed to create a genuine opening. The impact of unexpected historical events—as they arise, for instance, from a major crisis—sooner or later must be compressed back into the structurally preexistent mold, making *restoration* an integral part of the normal dynamics of the capital system.

Everything that *can be* in a sense already *has been.* Thus when the virtues of privatization are exalted it is not considered right and proper to ask the question: what problems have led in the first place to the newly deplored condition of nationalization that must now be reversed in order to establish the future of the *status quo ante?* For in the course of the adopted socioeconomic and political transformations nothing is supposed to change in such a way as to put at stake capital's structural parameters. Nationalization of private capitalist enterprises, whenever introduced, is treated simply as a temporary response to a crisis, to be contained within the overall determinations of capital as a mode of control, without affecting in any way whatsoever the fundamental *command structure* of the system itself.

As a result, on the face of it major but in actuality quite marginal economic changes amount only to some limited rescue operations to sections of bankrupt capital, precisely because the structural framework and command structure of the system itself remains unaltered. This is why the process of nationalization can just as easily be reversed once certain adjustments to the original crisis symptoms are made, permitting thereby the continuation of what went on before. Inevitably, all talk about "conquering the commanding heights of the mixed economy" as a way of establishing in the fullness of time a socialist order—predicated for almost a century by the leaders of the social-democratic labor movement—reveals its total vacuity in the light of these structural and temporal determinations that *a priori negate* the future possibilities of time.

Similarly—even if in a somewhat more surprising setting—the Soviet-type postrevolutionary order, operating within the structural parameters of the capital system, makes no attempt at fundamentally altering the inherited hierarchical command structure of *domination over labor.* Instead of embarking on the difficult road of instituting a socialist labor process—within the framework of *open temporality* that connects the present with a genuinely unfolding future—by creating the conditions of meaningful *self-management,* it responds to the grave crisis of the First World War and of its painful aftermath by changing the *commanding personnel* only, and even that by no means consistently. Rather, it changes the hereditary legal entitlement—the automatic property rights—of the ruling personnel but leaves the new type of personifications of capital in authoritarian control of the inherited hierarchical labor process. By doing so, however, some fundamental determinations of the old social metabolic control remain in force from which in due course the demand for the restoration of the legal entitlement to private property can arise, as indeed it did in the form of Gorbachev's perestroika (another instance of utterly misusing the notion of "restructuring"). It is therefore by no means accidental nor surprising that the loudest British crusader for privatization, prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and the Soviet politician Mikhail

Gorbachev, who proclaimed the "full equality of all types of property"—i.e., in plain language the restoration of capitalist private property sanctioned by the Party—should have so quickly and enthusiastically embraced each other as bosom friends. Such developments are not only possible but quite unavoidable for as long as the paralyzing restoratory temporality of capital prevails and the past—with its deadening inertia—continues to dominate the present, destroying the chances of a qualitatively different future order.

In terms of capital's unavoidably reactive and retroactive temporality, change is admissible only if it can be absorbed or assimilated within the structurally already given network of determinations. Whatever cannot be handled in that way must be done away with altogether. This is why genuine *qualitative* changes are unacceptable—corresponding to the spirit of the French axiom: *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"* (The more it changes the more it remains the same)—because they would endanger the cohesion of the given structural order. *Quantity* rules absolute in the capital system, in accordance with its retroactive temporality.

This also accords well with the requirement of *expansion,* which is of necessity conceived in strictly quantitative terms. There cannot be a way of defining expansion itself within the framework of the capital system in other than purely quantitative fashion, projecting it as the straightforward extension of the existent. It must be visualized as *more of the same thing as seen before*—even when the prospects of securing the advocated "more" appear to be most problematical, not to say absurd. For the absurdity of the unquestionable "more" (including Stalin's advocacy of pig-iron production bigger than in the United States as the criterion of having reached the highest stage of communism) is the only language understood by the system, and under no circumstance the orienting force of something *qualitatively different* that should arise from long-ignored human need.

The same goes for the consideration of *cost,* which must always be assessed in a mechanically quantifiable way. As a result, the idea that the advocated expansion might bring with it *prohibitive costs* not in readily quantifiable financial terms but on the plane of *qualitative* considerations—i.e., that under certain conditions the pursuit of "economic efficiency" and "profitable expansion" might indeed result in irreversible damage to the elementary conditions of a sustainable societal reproduction process—is inadmissible by the necessary mode of operation of the capital system.

This is how the innermost causal determinations of capital confine the system's feasible corrective actions to the effects and structurally assimilable consequences, in conformity to the nature of capital as unalterable *causa sui.* But in doing so they also project the shadow of total uncontrollability when the perverse overturning of the relationship between the relative and the absolute—by treating the historically

produced and limited *relative* (that is, capital's structural order) as the *untranscendable absolute,* and the *absolute* conditions of social metabolic reproduction and human survival as *readily manipulatable relative*—cannot be maintained any longer.

3.2 The Vicious Circle of Capital's Second Order Mediations

3.2.1 / THE CAPITAL SYSTEM'S SECOND order mediations constitute a vicious circle from which apparently there can be no escape. For they interpose themselves as ultimately destructive "mediations of primary mediation" between human beings and the vital conditions of their reproduction, nature.

Thanks to the preponderance of the capital system's second order mediations it becomes obfuscated that the conditions of societal reproduction can only be secured under all circumstances through the necessary intermediary of productive activity, which—not only in our own age but for as long as humanity survives—is inseparable from highly organized *industrial* productive activity. Tellingly, however, the apologists of the established mode of social metabolic reproduction continue to fantasize about our allegedly *post-industrial society,* perversely dismissing the absolute conditions of human survival as a historical anachronism in order to be able to misrepresent capital's historically generated and ever more problematical second order mediations as absolute and historically insurmountable.

The claimed "evidence" put forward in support of such theories is the ongoing transfer of the "smokestack industries" from the privileged metropolitan areas of the capitalist West to the "underdeveloped periphery." As if the atmosphere—which remains as polluted as ever (if not more so) despite such contemptuous discriminatory treatment of the Third World—could be safely and permanently cordoned off in convenient portions by a new Chinese Wall extending all the way to the moon; and as if the now and then hypocritically deplored productive practices of the smokestack industries did not arise in the first place—and would not of necessity continue to arise within the given reproductive framework—from the profit-seeking determinations of the globally intertwined economy (mostly to the benefit of the dominant "metropolitan" countries) of the ruling social metabolic order.

The second order mediations of the capital system can be summed up as follows:

- the *nuclear family,* articulated as the "microcosm" of society, which, in addition to its role in reproducing the species, partakes in all reproductive relations of the social "macrocosm," including the necessary mediation of the laws of the state to all individuals, thus vital also to the reproduction of the state;

- *alienated means of production* and their "personifications" through which capital acquires "iron will" and tough consciousness, strictly mandated for imposing on everyone conformity to the dehumanizing objective requirements of the given social metabolic order;
- *money* assuming a multiplicity of mystifying and ever more dominant forms in the course of historical development, from the worship of the golden calf at the time of Moses and from the stalls of the money-changers in the Temple of Jerusalem at the time of Jesus (figuratively depicted yet very real practices that were passionately castigated—but on the evidence of actual history, utterly in vain—by the moral code of the Judeo-Christian tradition), through the usurer's chest and the necessarily limited undertaking of early merchant capital all the way to the global stranglehold of the present-day international monetary system;
- *fetishistic production objectives,* submitting in one form or another the satisfaction of human needs (and the corresponding provision of use-values) to the blind imperatives of capital expansion and accumulation;
- labor *structurally divorced* from the possibility of *control* both in capitalist societies, where it must function as wage labor coerced and exploited by *economic compulsion,* and under the post-capitalist rule of capital over the *politically dominated* labor force;
- varieties of *capital's state formation* in their global setting, where they confront one another (at times even with the most violent means, dragging humankind to the brink of self-destruction) as self-oriented national states; and
- the uncontrollable *world market* within the framework of which the participants, protected by their respective national states to a degree feasible by the prevailing power relations, must accommodate themselves to the precarious conditions of economic coexistence while endeavoring to procure the highest practicable advantage to themselves by outwitting their competing counterparts, inevitably sowing thereby the seeds of ever more destructive conflicts.

In relation to the way in which all these constituents of the established mode of social metabolic control are linked together we can only talk of a vicious circle. For the particular second order mediations reciprocally sustain one another, making it impossible to counter the alienating and paralyzing force of any one of them taken in isolation while leaving intact the immense self-regenerative and self-imposing power of the system as a whole. On the basis of painful historical evidence the disconcerting truth of the matter is that the capital system succeeds in imposing itself on partial emancipatory efforts aimed at limited specific targets through the structural interconnections of its constituent parts. Accordingly, what must be confronted and overcome

by the adversaries of the established, incorrigibly discriminatory order of social metabolic reproduction is not only capital's positively self-sustaining force of surplus-labor extraction but also the devastating negative power—the apparently forbidding inertia—of its circular linkages.

This is why the real target of radical socialist transformation must be the capital system as such, *with all of its second order mediations,* and not simply the legal expropriation of the private capitalist personifications of capital. For the act of legal expropriation can be nullified with relative ease not only by the change of the traditional private capitalist form of personifications of capital into one of its historically feasible post-capitalist varieties, as seen for instance in Soviet-type societies. More than that, the disconcerting fact also remains that whatever might be instituted at one historical conjuncture by legislative means can be reversed and completely undone by suitable legislative measures under changed historical circumstances. Thus the legally enacted "expropriation of the expropriators" on which so much hope had been placed, especially at the early stages in the history of the international socialist movement, can be suitably "rolled back" in post-capitalist societies by openly reasserting in due course, when circumstances permit, the restoratory logic of private capitalism mentioned in section 3.1.2.

This is indeed what has been attempted already in Gorbachev's Russia, and more or less successfully accomplished during the last seven years—after a brief moment of projecting, totally in vain, the imaginary remedy of so-called market socialism—in the formerly Soviet-dominated countries of postwar Eastern Europe.

3.2.2 / THE DEFENDERS OF CAPITAL like to depict the existing order as some sort of divine predestination to which there could be no civilized alternative. Many of them arbitrarily project the capitalist exchange relations back to the dawn of history, eliminating in that way both their contingency and historical transcendability in order to be able to idealize (or at least to excuse) even their most destructive aspects.

In truth, European explorers as late as the eighteenth century were struck in the newly discovered parts of the world by the total absence of the possessive value system that they took for granted in their own countries. Indeed, the most radical and far-sighted thinker of the French Enlightenment, Diderot—the same philosopher who insisted that "if the day-worker is miserable, the nation is miserable"[26]—offered a profound critique of capitalist alienation by favorably contrasting the way of living of the formerly unknown tribes of some Pacific islands to that of his own country. He was in this respect more uncompromising than even his best contemporaries, including Rousseau. In an imaginative commentary on a community discovered by a famous French explorer, Captain Bougainville, Diderot indicated as basic contradictions of

the socioeconomic system dominant in Europe "the distinction of *yours and mine*" (distinction du *tien* et du *mien*), the opposition between "one's own particular utility and the general good" (ton utilité particulière et le bien général), and the subordination of the "general good to one's own particular good" (le bien général au bien particulier).[27] And he went even further, emphasizing that under the prevailing conditions these contradictions result in the production of *"superfluous wants"* (besoins superflus), *"imaginary goods"* (biens imaginaires) and "artificial needs" (besoins factices).[28] Thus he formulated his critique in much the same terms as those used by Marx almost a century later in describing the "artificial needs and imaginary appetites" produced under the alienating rule of capital.

The idealization of capitalist exchange relations became a rule somewhat after Diderot and other great figures of the Enlightenment had formulated their theories. It entered the horizon in the aftermath of the successful diffusion and consolidation of the system of "satanic mills," bringing with it the acceptance by bourgeois political economists that alienation and dehumanization were a price "well worth paying" in exchange for capitalist advancement, no matter how miserable the life chances of Diderot's day-worker might be. And later still even the memory of the once sincerely entertained dilemma of having to opt for the production of capitalist wealth, notwithstanding the misery and dehumanization that went with it, had been altogether wiped out from the consciousness of the capital system's ideologists. For the latter could unashamedly celebrate in the name of their fictitious "post-industrial society" the transfer of the "smokestack industries" and other "satanic enterprises" of advanced capitalism to the Third World. They callously disregarded the necessary consequences—as, for instance, the mass tragedy at Bhopal in "underdeveloped" India caused by the criminally substandard safety measures and productive practices of "advanced" U. S. Union Carbide—of such "transfers of technology," imposed as a matter of routine on the "underdeveloped" countries concerned, on the iniquitous ground of their *structural dependency* within the framework of the global capital system.

No matter how it might be dressed up by the ruling ideology, in this regard the system also asserted (and continues to assert) its power as an interdependent and hierarchically structured totality, making a gruesome mockery of all belief in finding a way out of the blind alley of structural dependency through the good offices of "Third World modernization" and a generous "transfer of technology." In reality the vicious circle of capital's second order mediations saw to it that all such expectations should come to naught, if not much worse than that, as it happened in Bhopal as well as in countless other parts of the destructively affected former colonial dependencies. Just as the same vicious circle made it sure, in a different setting, that the wishful thinking

of "market socialism"—loudly promoted by the post-revolutionary personifications of capital for the duration of shedding, with blinding speed, their post-capitalist political skin, in order to be able to secure the financially rather more lucrative private capitalist economic attire—should actually end in economically enforced "wage slavery" and tears for the masses of the people in Eastern Europe.

Naturally, the capital system did not arise from some mythical predestination, nor indeed out of the positive determinations and self-fulfilling requirements of so-called human nature. In fact, the latter happens to be as a rule circularly defined by the philosophers and political economists who adopt the standpoint of capital. They depict the world in terms of the value-imposing characteristics of the capitalist socioeconomic system, which in turn is supposed to have been "naturally" derived from "egotistic human nature" itself. Yet, no matter how powerful might be the influence of the ideologies that postulate capital's origin and continued domination in such terms, neither the beginning nor the forceful persistence of this mode of social metabolic control can be made intelligible on the ground of an arbitrarily postulated and historically insurmountable natural necessity, not to mention the mythology of humanity's predestination to an inescapably capitalist existence. And even if we consider human nature with its objectively given characteristics, as opposed to the just mentioned circular determination of capitalist values by a tendentiously projected "human nature" and vice versa, even that would be of no help to those who try to hypostatize the ahistorical origin and absolute permanence of the capital system on its basis. For real human nature is itself inherently historical and thus by no means suitable for arbitrarily freezing the dynamics of actual socioeconomic development so as to suit the convenience of capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction.

History, it goes without saying even if it is often tendentiously ignored, does not deserve its name unless it is conceived as open-ended in both directions, toward the past no less than in the direction of the future. Significantly, those who want to close off the irrepressible dynamics of historical development toward the future end up with the necessity of doing the same thing also in the direction of the past, otherwise they would not be able to complete the required ideological circle. And this is true by no means only of minor theories conceived from the standpoint of capital but also of the outstanding representatives of this approach, like Hegel. For the monumental scheme of the German philosopher—the consciously pursued task of gaining the necessary insight into what he unambiguously calls "the true *Theodicaea*, the justification of God in History"[29]—claims to put before the reader the grand design of the World Spirit's timelessly self-anticipating self-realization. It is telling that this grand a priori design, which must be closed off toward the future, culminates in the Hegelian philosophy of history at a stage that happens to be none other than the dominance

of capitalist and imperialist Europe, described as "absolutely the end of history." And since the historical movement must also be closed off in the direction of the past in order to remain perversely consistent to its ideological ground of future-denying determination, the claimed *"true Theodicaea"* as a whole must be depicted by Hegel as a supra-historical process of disclosing—as we have seen in chapter 1 of *Beyond Capital*—the "eternally present." The present of the World Spirit which "always has been," and can only be properly understood if it is mirrored, in the words of Hegel himself, by the philosophical embodiment of the "dialectical circle."

3.2.3 / WHAT IS REALLY AT STAKE in these matters is the *nature of capital,* and not the actual or fictitious characteristics of "human nature," nor indeed "the justification of God in History."

This issue is not only extremely complicated, since the historical aspects of capital's mode of social metabolic control are inextricably intertwined with its transhistorical dimension, creating thereby the illusion that capital as such stands above history. Also, it happens to be of the greatest—for human survival literally vital—practical importance. For, obviously, it is quite impossible to gain control over the alienating, dehumanizing and destructive determinations of capital, which proved to be uncontrollable throughout history, without understanding its nature.

According to Marx *"The nature of capital remains the same in its developed as in its undeveloped form."*[30] This is by no means intended to suggest that capital can escape the constraints and limitations of history, including the historical delimitation of its life span. To make these problems intelligible it is necessary to situate them not in a class-determined Hegelian "dialectical circle" but within the framework of an objectively grounded dialectical social ontology, which should not be confused with the traditional theological or metaphysical varieties of ontology. For the sameness of capital in both its undeveloped and developed form applies only to its innermost nature and not to its historically always adapted mode and form of existence.

The socially dominating role of capital throughout the whole of modern history is self-evident. However, what requires explanation is how it is possible that under certain conditions a given "nature" (the nature of capital) should unfold and realize itself—in accordance with its objective nature, with its inherent potentialities and limitations—by successfully following (despite even the sharpest antagonisms with the people negatively affected by its mode of functioning) its own inner laws of development, from its undeveloped form to its form of maturity.

In this sense, what is required is to understand the objective dialectic of *contingency* and *necessity,* as well as of the *historical* and the *transhistorical* in the context of the capital system's mode of operation. For these are the categorial parameters that help to

identify the relative and absolute *limits* within which the always historically adjusted power of capital can assert itself *transhistorically,* across many centuries. Subject to such categorial and structural determinations capital, as a mode of social metabolic control, can successfully assert over all human beings the operational laws emanating from its nature, irrespective of how well or ill disposed they might be toward their impact under determinate historical circumstances.

The unalterable nature of capital—which is the same thing as its objective structural determination—makes it

1. eminently suitable to the realization of *certain types* of objectives within the systemic framework of its *second order* mediations, and
2. totally and *powerfully inimical* to undertaking all those types which cannot fit into the established network of second order mediations, no matter how vital the human interests at their roots might be.

This is what circumscribes capital's historical sustainability for fulfilling the functions of a viable social reproduction process (1) in positive and (2) in negative terms.

One of the examples given by Marx to illustrate the sameness of capital's nature in its developed and undeveloped forms concerns the relationship between creditor and debtor. He writes:

> In the code which the influence of the slave-owners, shortly before the outbreak of the American Civil War, imposed on the territory of New Mexico, it is said that the laborer, inasmuch as the capitalist has bought its labor power, "is his (the capitalist's) money." The same view was current among the Roman patricians. The money they had advanced to the plebeian debtor had been transformed *via* the means of subsistence into the flesh and blood of the debtor. This "flesh and blood" were, therefore, "their money." Hence, the Shylock-law of the Ten Tables, Linguet's hypothesis that the patrician creditors, from time to time prepared, beyond the Tiber, banquets of debtors' flesh, may remain as undecided as that of Daumer on the Christian Eucharist.[31]

The point is that capital must assert its absolute domination over all human beings, even in the most inhuman form if they fail to conform to its interests and its drive for accumulation. This is what makes the "Shylock law" by no means an aberration or an exception but the rational rule in the course of capital's metamorphoses from its undeveloped to its developed forms. Indeed, if we compare the monstrous

inhumanities of the capital system in the twentieth century, accomplished on an earlier quite inconceivable mass scale—from the horrors of the first global imperialist war of 1914–18 through the Nazi Holocaust and Stalin's labor camps all the way to the atom bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the limited "artisanal" approach of a Shakespearean Shylock pales to insignificance. For the historical adjustment of capital to the new circumstances of mass extermination did not change capital's nature in the least. By adopting a *de-personalized* variety of the original "Shylock law" to suit the changed circumstances, capital was able to impose on humanity the inhumanities dictated by its nature on an incommensurably larger scale than ever before, conveniently exempting at the same time its own personifications from blame and responsibility. Doing this, capital only changed its earlier mode and means of operation, utilizing to the full the available technology and instruments of destruction against the challenges it had to overcome in accordance with its nature.

Characteristically, from the standpoint of capital even the most problematical forms of historical development must be depicted with "uncritical positivism." Indeed, this must be done even by the greatest thinkers who conceptualize the world from capital's necessarily short-circuited standpoint, including Hegel. It comes therefore as no surprise that the idealist rationalization of the material contingencies, and thereby their curious elevation to the lofty plane of "ideal necessity," should impose its negative consequences at all levels of the Hegelian philosophy. Even the most palpable material processes must be turned upside down and twisted around, in the interest of social apologetics. Accordingly, they must be derived in their material facticity from the absolutely unquestionable, let alone objectionable, self-determination of the Idea itself, in accordance with the ideally stipulated "principle" and "category" of the historical period to which the developments in question belong.

As an example we may think of the way in which even the technology of modern warfare is idealized by Hegel. He achieves this idealization by "deducing" modern warfare from what in his view must be at the apex of the philosophically most commendable determinations: "thought and the universal." This is how Hegel confronts his readers with a most peculiar philosophical deduction:

> The principle of the modern world—thought and the universal—has *given courage a higher form,* because its display now seems to be more mechanical, the act not of this particular person, but of a member of a whole. Moreover, it seems to be turned not against single persons, but against a hostile *group,* and hence *personal bravery appears impersonal.* It is *for this reason that thought had invented the gun,* and the invention of this weapon, which has changed the purely personal form of bravery into a more abstract one, is no accident. [32]

In this way, through its direct derivation from "the principle of the modern world," the material contingency of ever more powerful modern warfare, rooted in globally expanding capitalist technology, acquires not only its "ideal necessity." It is also simultaneously set above all conceivable criticism in virtue of its full adequacy—"the rationality of the actual"—to that principle. And since courage as "intrinsic worth" is inextricably linked by Hegel to the "absolute, final end, the sovereignty of the state,"[33] the apologetic circle of history reaching its culmination in the Germanic "civilizing" state of the capital system, with its ruthlessly efficacious modern warfare "invented by thought" for the sake of realizing, in a suitable "impersonal" form the "image and actuality of reason," is fully closed.

Yet, despite the intellectual greatness of its originator, the thought that the mass destruction of human beings—just because it is directed against groups and not particular individuals, as if the destroyed groups of people could be simply constructed as abstract "numbers of a whole," instead of being human persons under all feasible circumstances—should be considered a "higher form of courage" and an "abstract form of bravery" directly emanating from the superior reason of inventive World Spirit, is worse than absurd. For capital's power of overturning everything—by removing their *human anchorage* through the universalization of fetishistic commodity production—is mirrored here in philosophy by turning human values upside down, in the name of "thought and the universal." Thus it becomes possible perversely to equate the most extreme form of *cowardice*—as practiced in recent wars, whereby the technologically superior combatant, with no risk to himself, makes so-called smart bombs rain out of the sky on his "underdeveloped" enemy—with the highest form of *courage and bravery.* With the help of this kind of reasoning it becomes possible to accept, and indeed to philosophically glorify, the fateful and potentially catastrophic idea that *higher abstraction* and its correspondingly developed technology amount to a *higher form of courage and morality.* This is a fateful and indeed potentially catastrophic idea. For the ultimate logic of the underlying actual trend in modern warfare, arising from the liquidation of all human frame of reference through the universal triumph of capitalist reification and of the concomitant impersonal logic of the capital system, in complete defiance of human need and reason, is not "impersonal bravery" but the truly impersonal destruction of humankind in its entirety: Holocaust and Hiroshima combined on a global scale.

To be sure, in its own terms of reference it is understandable that even the most destructive contradictions of the capital system, protected by its network of second order mediations, should be rationalized, excused, and often even idealized from the "standpoint of political economy," i.e., the vantage point of capital. For once the prevailing order of things is taken for granted as corresponding with "full adequacy" to

the "rationality of the actual," every conceivable problem is bound to be envisaged, by the same token, as in its own time and place of necessity fully resolved, and every discrepancy or difficulty properly remedied as a matter of course; in Adam Smith's vision by the benevolent "invisible hand," and in the Hegelian conception by the equally forthcoming/obliging "List der Vernunft," the "cunning of Reason." In the prosaic reality of the actually existing capital system, however, the problems and contradictions that must be faced assert themselves in a far from benevolent and reassuring way. For the established system of second order mediations not only controls the human agents of history on the ground of the *objective imperatives* of capital's self-expansion. For good measure, it also mystifies them with regard to their motivations as "free agents" as well as in relation to the perceived margin of their actions.

The second order mediations of the capital system through which the vital functions of social metabolic reproduction must be carried on constitute a most bewildering network into which the particular human individuals are inserted. As members of a social group they are located at some predetermined point in the command structure of capital well before they have the chance to learn even the first words in their family environment. Despite the misleading discourse of the ruling ideology about "social mobility," they may escape from their "born into" location, in the small minority of cases, only as isolated individuals—perhaps by betraying their class allegiances. The thoroughly apologetic character of the discourse on "social mobility" (highly promoted on account of its soothing and pacifying functions) is revealed by the simple fact that all such individual escapes put together, over centuries, did not alter in the slightest the exploitative surplus-labor-extracting *command structure of capital*. Let alone could they make the established social order itself democratic and "classless," as cynical politicians and their ever-obliging speech-writers continue to claim.

Moreover, the respective national states of all individuals are themselves also located at determinate—structurally more or less favored—points in the international pecking order of capital, greatly at the disadvantage of the "have-nots" of the less powerful countries (amounting in fact to the overwhelming majority of humankind). This makes the preaching of "individual social mobility" as a way of alleviating, and in due course happily resolving, the global system's iniquities and contradictions blatantly mystifying in its intent and self-deluding in its impact on all those who expect their emancipation from it. Besides, even in terms of actual class mobility, the situation is by no means better. For capital is spontaneously and necessarily mobile in its pursuit of profit maximization, and can be readily transferred from one country to another under the circumstances of favorable profit expectations in our own days with the speed of light. By contrast the international "mobility of labor" encounters immense practical obstacles and prohibitive material costs, since it must be always

strictly subordinated to the imperative of profitable capital accumulation. Not to mention the fact that the consciously pursued practice of the workers' miseducation and ideological mystification, exercised in the interest of their national capital, erects mountain-size obstacles to the development of labor's international consciousness.

And worst of all, because of the perverse mediation of the essential socioeconomic reproductive functions through the alienated objectification of living labor as capital—superimposed on labor in a reified form, confounding the category of always necessary means and material of production with capital as such, in its independence from and indeed hostile opposition to labor—the historically generated and likewise historically changeable human power relations appear as purely material entities, unalterable in their essential constitution. Thus the ground is firmly established for the broadest diffusion of belief in the convenient wisdom of "there is no alternative" to which every "rational individual" is expected to subscribe and, in practical terms, also to unreservedly conform. This is how the vicious circle of capital's second order mediations adds insult to injury, reinforcing thereby the established system's objective power of structural domination over labor through the "internalizing" mystification of the individual's allegedly "free and voluntary" acceptance of all the dictates that emanate from *capital's unalterable nature* and necessary mode of operation.

3.2.4 / THE CONSTITUTION OF THE CAPITAL system is identical to the emergence of its second order mediations. Indeed, capital as such is nothing but a dynamic, all-engulfing and dominating mode and means of reproductive mediation, articulated as a historically specific set of structures and institutionally embedded as well as safeguarded social practices. It is a clearly identifiable system of mediations that in its properly developed form strictly subordinates all social reproductive functions—from gender and family relations to material production and even to the creation of works of art—to the absolute requirement of capital expansion, i.e., of its own continued expansion and expanded reproduction as a system of social metabolic mediation.

The process of constitution of this system of mediation is, of course, full of social and historical contingencies, as we have seen above in section 3.2.2., with reference to Diderot's reflections on the eighteenth-century discovery of very different types of social metabolic reproduction that happened to be quite unaffected by the *"meum and tuum"* of European possessive individualism. Nevertheless, in the course of European developments the impact of the contingent material reproductive factors—favoring in a variety of fields the appearance of embryonic forms of socioeconomic interchange in affinity with capital's mode of metabolic control—becomes *cumulative* through the spontaneous repetition of the practices required for successful exchange.

Naturally, the more such factors and reproductive practices coalesce through their *cumulative repetition,* the more they tend to constitute a powerful *system* and reinforce one another. In this way they simultaneously intensify the combined impact of the emerging system as a whole, thanks to the intricate interchanges and ever more reciprocally complementary functioning of its constituent parts. Thus the original contingencies are progressively pushed into the background and leave their place to ever more entrenched overall *necessity*. For once the second order mediations are articulated and consolidated as a coherent *system,* it becomes practically impossible to eliminate one or another of its specific mediatory structures and functions *in isolation,* or to introduce into the firmly established system structurally new and rival factors that would run diametrically counter to its complex network of *mutually reinforcing* constituents.

Under such circumstances and determinations only an alternative *all-embracing structural/systemic change* is feasible with any hope of lasting success. This raises the immensely challenging problems of transition from the established mode of social metabolic reproduction, with its historically specific system of second order mediations, to a qualitatively different social order. It is therefore neither accidental, nor a form of "utopianism," that the Marxian radical negation of the rule of capital should envisage the breakdown of the established system of reproductive mediations as a whole to which the socialist project must provide a comprehensive structural alternative.

However, formulating the issue in this way does not mean that the severe problems of transition out of the projected impasse and breakdown of the given social metabolic order to something *positively sustainable* can be dispensed with. Quite the contrary. For the avoidance of the difficulties of transition from the capital system to a socialist form of metabolic control, and a failure to theorize the general orienting principles and the viable practical measures of the required transitional mode of social reproductive interchange, can only strengthen the nowadays all too prevalent belief in the historical untranscendability of the established order, no matter how profound its structural crisis might be.

4. The Activation of Capital's Absolute Limits

EVERY SYSTEM OF SOCIAL metabolic reproduction has its intrinsic or absolute limits which cannot be transcended without changing the prevailing mode of control into a qualitatively different one.[34] When such limits are reached in the course of historical development, it becomes imperative to transform the established order's structural parameters—or, in other words, its objective "practical premises"—which normally circumscribe the overall margin of adjustment of the reproductive practices feasible under the circumstances. To do so means subjecting to a fundamental critical scrutiny nothing less than the historically given society's most basic practical orienting principles and their instrumental/institutional corollaries. For under the circumstances of the unavoidable radical change they turn from being the valid presuppositions and the apparently insurmountable structural framework of all theoretical as well as practical critique into absolutely paralyzing constraints.

In principle the transformatory practical critique should not constitute a prohibitive problem even in our own historical period, irrespective of how far-reaching and complex the required adjustments might have to be. After all, it is a matter of vital concern to human beings to secure "the rule of society over wealth" in the universalizable, potentially all-embracing sense of their economy, concerned with the economy of life and the proper relationship between invested effort and achievement. The trouble is, though, that such an aim could not be in sharper contradiction to "the rule of wealth over society" prevailing of necessity under the capital system. The latter is imposed on the social individuals in the name of the highly selective/exclusive, and in that way most tendentiously perverted sense of an extremely problematical "economy," which must be run for the benefit of the ruling minority despite its crying wastefulness. Thus the frequently advanced argument of "insurmountable complexity"—from Max Weber to Hayek and to their present-day followers—is only used to lend

the semblance of rational justification to the absolute permanence of an ultimately unsustainable socioeconomic order. Accordingly, the meaning given to "complexity" by all those who hide their real concerns and vested interests behind that notion is not that instituting the necessary qualitative changes might indeed be very difficult, calling for the concerted and dedicated efforts of everyone, but that embarking on such an enterprise should not even be contemplated, let alone practically attempted at all.

Yet the truth of the matter is that the claimed "insurmountable complexities" that must be faced today arise not from the a priori requirements of any "extended economic order" but from the problematical structural presuppositions of the capital system itself. For precisely because this system of social metabolic control is *antagonistically structured,* from its smallest constitutive cells or "microcosms" to its most comprehensive global units of economic and political interchange, the practical premises of its mode of continued operation must be set so as to secure the permanent subordination of labor to capital. Any attempt to modify that structural subordination must count as an absolute taboo, hence the self-evident proof of "insurmountable complexity." Indeed, the more the changing historical circumstances point in the direction of a necessary change in the antagonistic, ever more wasteful and irrational structural premises of the capital system, the more categorically the preexistent operative imperatives must be enforced and the more narrowly the margin of acceptable adjustments must be set. This is why in the last few decades the dictum of *"there is no alternative"* to the prevailing material dictates had become the unchallengeable axiom of the capital system all over the world.

Maintaining the stability of a system built upon a whole range of explosive structural antagonisms is quite unthinkable without the superimposition of artificial layers of complexity whose primary function is the perpetuation of the ruling order and the postponement of "the moment of truth." But since the activation of the absolute limits of capital as a viable reproductive system appeared on our historical horizon, engaging with the question of how to overcome the destructive structural presuppositions of the established mode of social metabolic control cannot be avoided much longer.

To be sure, the deeply entrenched interests of capital and its "personifications" militate against all serious consideration of this question. For capital cannot function without enforcing as firmly as ever (even in the most authoritarian fashion if need be) its practical presuppositions and structural antagonisms. If it was not for that, the rational assessment of the historically unfolding dangers to the very conditions of human survival would be by itself a great help in tilting the balance in favor of the necessary changes. However, rational arguments on their own are utterly powerless for overcoming enmity to change when the fundamental practical premisses of the materially dominant party are at stake. The rationalizations of "insurmountable

complexity" and of its telling corollaries, backed up by the material might of the established order, cannot be persuasively counteracted even by the best rational arguments unless the latter are also fully supported by a practically viable alternative material force—a force capable of substituting its new orienting principles, together with their organizing and productive embodiments, for the ruling practical presuppositions of the given social order that demonstrate their historical anachronism every day by the increasingly intolerant appeal of capital's personifications to the wisdom of "there is no alternative." For, revealingly, in our own days (in the spirit of that wisdom) even the limited defensive organs of the labor movement—its traditional parliamentary parties and trade unions—must be rendered totally ineffective either by integrating the top echelons of their leadership within the framework of an unholy consensus or by openly mobilizing the oppressive legal devices and the direct material repressive force of the "democratic state" against the formerly tolerated activities of organized labor.

Thus, given the oppressive structural premises of the capital system, the Marxian socialist project could not confine itself to a theoretical demonstration of the necessity to pursue a rationally sustainable course of social metabolic reproduction. It could not do so despite the fact that in historical terms the most important single aspect of the socialist enterprise happens to make it possible—by eliminating class antagonisms and the fateful impact of vested interests inseparable from the capital system's antagonistic structure—that the periodically unavoidable structural changes of social development be rationally introduced as a matter of course by the individuals who are fully empowered to exercise control over their life-activity. The theoretical demonstration of the rational course of fully cooperative—i.e., socialist/communitarian—action required for the realization of this end had to be complemented by the material articulation of its truth. This is why Marx had to insist that "the weapon of criticism cannot replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force;. . . *It is not enough for thought to strive for realization, reality must itself strive toward thought.*"[35] At the same time he also indicated the way out of the dilemma implicit in this line of approach by stressing that "theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses. . . . Theory can be realized in a people *only insofar as it is the realization of the needs of that people.*" [36]

Laying down these criteria, though realistic in the overall assessment of what had to be done, made the socialist discourse doubly difficult. On the one hand, it had to demonstrate with scientific rigor the validity of its rational "weapon of criticism" by fully taking into account the strength of its adversary both in general theoretical and in historical/practical terms. And on the other hand, unlike the conceptions of even the most noble utopian socialists for whom "future history resolves itself into

the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans. . . . For, in their eyes, how can people, when once they understand their system, fail to see in it the best possible plan of the best possible state of society?,"[37] it had to rest its case on the ability or failure of radical socialist theory to "grip the masses," and to do so by no means on account of its invention of "the best possible plan of the best possible state of society." Marx knew very well that there could be no such thing because all actual accomplishments carried within them the seeds of their necessary future transcendence. And he also knew that lasting success for the socialist project could only be envisaged on the ground that the aspirations expressed in it corresponded to the real needs of the people.

Despite the defeats of the historical left, or rather, more than ever precisely in view of them, the criteria of historically sustainable success originally laid down by Marx—according to which "*it is not enough for thought to strive for realization, reality must itself strive toward thought"* because *"theory can be realized in a people only insofar as it is the realization of the needs of that people"*—remain valid both in regard to the strategy to be followed and for a proper assessment of the failures of the past.

In relation to the latter, it is painfully obvious that the social changes imposed in the name of the socialist project—especially under the slogan of "socialism in a single country"—were tragically distant from the "realization of the needs of the people." But even the original Marxian socialist project had to suffer the constraints of its time. For the crisis of capital perceived by Marx in the mid-nineteenth century in the "European little corner of the world" failed to become for a long time a general crisis. Instead, the continued historical ascendancy of the bourgeois order on the "much larger terrain" of the rest of the world dissipated for an entire historical period even the relatively limited European crisis. As a result, the socialist movement itself as first articulated by Marx and his intellectual and political comrades in arms could not help being fatefully premature. *The Marxian theory was striving as it could at the time of its conception toward its realization, but reality itself refused to strive toward it in a way hoped for and stiputated by its originator.*

Today the situation is radically different. In a significant sense it is even the diametrical opposite of what used to be the case in Marx's lifetime. For although the deepening structural crisis of capital means that "reality is beginning to move toward thought," it seems that as a result of the defeats and failures of the socialist movement (especially in the recent past) thought itself—together with the necessary material and organizational forces without which even the most valid thought cannot "grip the masses" and become effective material force—refuses to move toward reality and "strive for realization." In the meantime the needs of the people remain frustrated and denied as ever before.

However, despite the major defeats of the past the deciding issue is that the end of capital's historical ascendancy in our own age—through the extension of its domination even to the most distant and formerly isolated pockets of the planet—has brought with it the activation of the absolute limits of this system of social metabolic control. Given the relationship of capital's mode of societal reproduction to *causality* and *time* discussed at the beginning of chapter 3, the margin of displacing the system's contradictions becomes ever narrower and its pretenses to the unchallengeable status of *causa sui* palpably absurd, notwithstanding the once unimaginable destructive power at the disposal of its personifications. For through the exercise of such power capital can destroy humankind in general—as indeed it seems to be bent on doing just that, and with it, to be sure, also its own system of control—but not selectively its historical antagonist.

ALTHOUGH WE MUST BE aware of the activation of capital's absolute limits in order to remain constantly alert to its destructive implications, it is also necessary to introduce some qualifications, so as to avoid possible misunderstandings and the illusions of false opitimism with regard to the way out of the crisis.

First, on the hopeful side, it must be stressed that the term "absolute limits" does not imply anything in and by itself absolutely untranscendable, as the apologists of the ruling "extended economic order" try to make us believe in order to submit to the wisdom of "there is no alternative." The limits in question are absolute for the capital system only, due to the innermost structural determinations of its mode of social metabolic control.

The second, far less reassuring, necessary qualification is that we should not imagine that capital's relentless drive to transcend its boundaries will suddenly come to a halt, on the basis of a rational insight that now the system as such has reached its absolute limits. On the contrary, what is most likely is that every attempt will be made to cope with the intensifying contradictions by trying to enlarge the capital system's margin of maneuver within its own structural confines. But because the causal foundations responsible for the activation of the absolute limits of this mode of control cannot be addressed within such confines, let alone properly remedied, corrective action in relation to some of the most explosive problems of the troublesome social metabolic process is bound to be pursued in other ways. It will be done by manipulating the encountered obstacles and stretching to the extreme the given forms and mechanisms of reproductive interchange on the plane of their now even by the "captains of industry," deplored limiting effects.

In view of the fact that the most intractable of the global capital system's contradictions is the one between the internal unrestrainability of its economic constituents

and the now inescapable necessity of introducing major restraints, any hope for finding a way out of this vicious circle under the circumstances marked by the activation of capital's absolute limits must be vested in the political dimension of the system. Thus in the light of recent legislative measures that already point in this direction, there can be no doubt that the full power of the state will be activated to serve the end of squaring capital's vicious circle, even if it means subjecting all potential dissent to extreme authoritarian constraints. Equally there can be no doubt that whether such a remedial action (in conformity to the global capital system's structural limits) will be successfully pursued, despite its obvious authoritarian character and destructiveness, will depend on the working class's ability or failure to radically rearticulate the socialist movement as a truly international enterprise.

In any event, what makes matters particularly serious is that the far-reaching issues that confront humankind at the present stage of historical development cannot be avoided either by the ruling capital system or by any alternative to it. Although, as a matter of historical contingency, they have arisen from the activation of capital's absolute limits, they cannot be conveniently bypassed, nor their gravity wished out of existence. On the contrary, they remain the overriding requirement of all-embracing remedial action in the reproductive practices of humankind for as long as the vicious circle of capital's present-day historical contingency is not irretrievably consigned to the past. Paradoxically, the ability to meet in a sustainable way the absolute historical challenge that had arisen from the perverse historical contingencies and contradictions of the capital system constitutes the measure of viability of *any* social metabolic alternative to the ruling order. Consequently, the struggle to overcome the threatening absolute limits of the capital system is bound to determine the historical agenda for the foreseeable future.

The intractable contradiction between capital's unrestrainability and the now historically unavoidable necessity of fundamental restraints highlights a great problem for the future. For through the dynamism of its unrestrainability capital in the past could secure great productive advancement and thereby move in the direction of potentially satisfying human needs and aspirations. The fact that in the course of historical development the original unrestrainable dynamism had turned against the elementary conditions of human survival, through the activation of capital's absolute limits, does not mean that the positive cause of continued productive advancement itself—the necessary precondition for fulfilling legitimate human aspirations—can be willfully abandoned.

Understandably, under the present conditions of crisis all kinds of false alternatives are put forward by the defenders of the capital system. Thus, to take a prominent example, the advocates of corrective measures assembled under the flag of *The*

Limits to Growth[38] argue that the pursuit of growth as such ought to be abandoned in favor of a fictitious "global equilibrium [in which] population and capital are essentially stable."[39] Naturally, they recommend this solution without submitting to serious criticism the socioeconomic system itself, which is guilty of producing the symptoms quixotically castigated by them.[40] Yet, contrary to the false dichotomy of "growth or no growth," the historical challenge of having to struggle against the catastrophic implications of capital's absolute limits consists precisely in the need to find viable solutions to every one of the contradictions manifest in them by a successful qualitative practical redefinition of the meaning of productive advancement, in place of the capital system's fetishistic quantity-oriented way of treating the problems of growth: A *qualitative redefinition* that would embrace the whole of humankind on the basis of *substantive equality,* instead of continuing to exclude the overwhelming majority of human beings from the fruits of productive advancement, as before, throughout the long stretch of capital's historical ascendancy. Characteristically, all concern with equality happens to be dismissed by the inspirer of the computerized pseudo-scientific model-mongering that permeates the kind of literature epitomized by *The Limits to Growth* as "the shibboleth of equality."[41] However, irrespective of the diligence with which this spirit is applied and the fanfare with which its circular conclusions from arbitrary assumptions are greeted under the pretenses of sound academic quantification, no amount of such elitistic insult and demagoguery can deflect attention from the grave issues brought to the fore by the structural crisis of the capital system.

THE FOUR ISSUES[42] CHOSEN for discussion below do not stand for isolated characteristics. Far from it. For every one of them happens to be the focal point of a set of major contradictions. As such they prove to be insurmountable precisely because in conjunction with one another they greatly intensify the disruptive power of each as well as the overall impact of the particular sets in question taken as a whole.

Thus the irreconcilable structural antagonism between global capital—which happens to be unrestrainably transnational in its objective tendency—and the necessarily constraining national states is inseparable from at least three fundamental contradictions: those between (1) *monopoly* and *competition;* (2) ever-increasing *socialization* of the labor process and the *discriminatory/preferential appropriation* of its products (by varieties of capital's personifications, from private capitalists to self-perpetuating collective bureaucracies); and (3) the unstoppably growing *international division of labor* and the irrepressible drive of the unevenly developing and therefore necessarily shifting preponderant powers of the global capital system (in the post–Second World War period, primarily the United States) for *hegemonic domination*.

Similarly, the problems discussed in Section 5.2 of *Beyond Capital* are not confined to loudly trumpeted but conveniently limited environmental issues, like the hypocritical concern in official circles with the "ozone hole" (which should bring brisk business and maximal profits to some transnational chemical companies, like the British ICI, for their promoted "ozone-friendly alternative to the guilty CFC gases"). They embrace all vital aspects of the social metabolic conditions of reproduction, from the wasteful allocation of resources (be they renewable or non-renewable) to accumulating poison in all fields for the detriment of many generations to come; and doing so not only in the form of the most irresponsible bequest of the atomic legacy for the future (in the field of both weaponry and power plants) but also in regard to chemical pollution of all kinds, including those in the domain of agriculture. Moreover, as far as agricultural production is concerned, condemning countless millions worldwide literally to starvation goes hand in hand with the most absurd protectionist "common agricultural policies," devised for securing profitably institutionalized waste irrespective of its immediate and long-term consequences. Any attempt to deal with the reluctantly acknowledged problems must be conducted under the prohibitive weight of the fundamental laws and structural antagonisms of the system. Thus the "corrective measures" envisaged within the framework of big international jamborees—like the 1992 gathering in Rio de Janeiro—amount to absolutely nothing,[43] since they must be subordinated to the perpetuation of the established global power relations and vested interests. Causality and time must be treated as a plaything of the dominant capitalistic interests, no matter how acute the dangers. Thus the future tense is callously and irresponsibly confined to the narrowest horizon of immediate profit expectations. At the same time, the causal dimension of even the most vital conditions of human survival is perilously brushed aside. For only the reactive and retroactive manipulation of symptoms and effects is compatible with the continuing rule of capital's *causa sui*.

In the same way, as regards the quite elementary and politically irrepressible demand for the liberation of women, a number of major issues coalesce in it and—as a permanent reminder of the unfulfilled and unfulfillable promises of the capital system as such—turn the great historic cause of women's emancipation into a *non-integrable* challenge to the rule of capital. For there can be no way of satisfying the demand for women's emancipation—which surfaced a very long time ago, but acquired its urgency in a historic period coinciding with the structural crisis of capital—without a *substantive* change in the established social relations of inequality. In this sense, the women's movement that at first appeared to be limited in scope reaches as a historic challenge well beyond the boundaries of its immediate demands. Indeed it cannot help questioning the core of the ruling system of social metabolic reproduction no matter by what ruses the established order might try to derail its multifaceted

manifestations. For by the very nature of its objectives it cannot be placated by formal/legal "concessions," whether at the level of parliamentary voting rights or at that of the grotesquely publicized opening up of the privileged membership of the Stock Exchange to the token bourgeois woman.

Moreover, by focusing attention on the *non-integrable substantive nature* of the matter pursued, the demand for women's emancipation also haunts the bourgeois order with its own past, bringing to the fore the total betrayal of the original ethos on the basis of which that order gained its ascendancy. Thus the demand for women's emancipation offers a powerful reminder that *"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity"* were once upon a time not empty words or cynical mystifications to divert attention from their actually existing opposite. Rather, they were the passionately pursued objectives of a class—the progressive bourgeoisie still sharing a substantive common cause with labor within the framework of the Third Estate—which later had to empty, and later still had to dismiss with contempt as "shibboleths," its own former beliefs and aspirations in order to justify even the most crying iniquities and inhumanities of the rule of capital in the social order.

The great trouble with the cause of women's emancipation for the ruling order is not only that it cannot be satisfied at all in the form of ultimately vacuous formal/legal devices. What makes it equally if not more undigestible is that it cannot be characterized and dismissed as the gratuitous "envy" of the "hard-earned position of the wealth creators by undeserving labor." In this way the mystifying condemnation of concern with substantive equality—its equation with "unjust class aspirations"—by the ruling ideology falls by the wayside. Thus the challenge of women's emancipation inevitably reopens the painful questions of what went wrong with the once sincerely held aspirations of human emancipation, and—in the light of not getting anywhere with the substantive demands for equality—why it all had to go wrong on the ground of the unfolding capital system. Furthermore, to make matters worse, it is now impossible to run away from the uncomfortable questions of "what" and "why" by curtly dismissing this new historic challenge—one that could not and cannot be substantively tackled within the structural framework of any known or imaginable class society—as yet another "shibboleth of equality." Consequently, just when the personifications of capital became confident that they had succeeded in permanently laying the ghost of socialism and with it the specter of class emancipation to rest—claiming at the same time with typical self-contradiction both that we live in a "classless society" (and the like), and that the "shibboleth of equality" is the manifestation of "class envy and class greed"—they had to be greatly disappointed. Because they are now confronted not only by the demand for women's emancipation, but also by its inherent linkages to the necessary emancipation of human beings in general—both in strictly class terms

within the capitalistically advanced countries and in the iniquitous relations of the latter to the super-exploited masses of the so-called Third World—from the rule of capital that always asserts itself as an incurably hierarchical system of domination and subordination. Thus in a paradoxical and most unexpected form—since the class of women cuts across all social class boundaries—the demand for women's emancipation proves to be a heel of Achilles to capital: by demonstrating the total incompatibility of substantive equality with the capital system under historical conditions when the issue as such will not fade away, nor can it be violently repressed (unlike class militancy often in the past), nor indeed can it be emptied of its content and "realized" in the form of vacuous formal criteria.

Finally, the issue of chronic unemployment brings into play the contradictions and antagonisms of the global capital system in their potentially most explosive form. For all measures devised to cure the profound structural defect of growing unemployment tend to aggravate the situation, instead of alleviating the problem. To be sure, it would be a miracle if it could be otherwise, since all of the practical premises and causal determinants of the system must be taken for given and unalterable. Ruthlessly enforcing the structural subordination of labor to capital even in the "liberal democratic" countries (recently with more openly anti-labor laws) and pretending at the same time that it does not exist in this best of all actually feasible worlds is the typical way of dealing with the difficulties. Thus large-scale state intervention at all levels and in all matters with direct or indirect bearing on the continued rule of capital over labor—made more than ever necessary by the deepening structural crisis of the system—goes hand in hand with the most cynical ideological mystification concerning the one and only viable form of socioeconomic reproduction, the idealized "market society" and the "equal opportunities" that such a society is supposed to offer to all individuals. The reality, though, is that even in the most privileged part of the capital system the most serious social disease of mass unemployment had assumed chronic proportions, with no end in sight to the worsening trend. In capitalistically advanced Europe alone there are well over 20 million unemployed people, and at least another 16 million in other "advanced capitalist countries." All these menacing figures are recorded in the form of greatly understated if not cynically falsified official figures in terms of which in Britain, for instance, *16 hours* of work per week (often associated with the most miserable remuneration, offering to millions of workers £2 per hour, i.e., the princely sum of $3 at 1994 currency values) counts as "full employment," and many categories of actually unemployed people are arbitrarily excluded, under one pretext or another, from the unemployment statistics. The remedy to the ensuing deficiencies and "dysfunctions" due to chronic unemployment in all countries under the rule of capital is envisaged, in strict conformity to the ultimately self-contradictory

causal parameters of the capital system, in terms of "increased labor discipline" and "greater efficiency," resulting in the depression of wage levels, in the growing casualization of the labor force even in the capitalistically most advanced countries, and in an overall increase in unemployment. The much idealized strategy of "globalization"—in truth yet another name for the continued enforcement of the most iniquitous socioeconomic power relations between the capitalistically advanced and the "underdeveloped" or Third World countries of the global capital system—aggravate the problems of chronic unemployment also in the "metropolitan" or "core" countries, accelerating the earlier mentioned trend for the downward equalization of the differential rate of exploitation.

Taming or repressing the labor force—with the active cooperation of its political and trades union leadership—in the name of labor discipline, increased productivity, market efficiency, and international competitiveness, is of no real solution in this respect, despite the *partial* advantages that can be *temporarily* derived from it for one section or another of competing capital. In its overall effect such measures are not able to counter the trend toward global recession—and in due course depression—for the simple reason that it is impossible to squeeze "growing purchasing power" (required for a "healthy expansion") from the shrinking wages and the deteriorating standard of living of the labor force. Despite all efforts and resources of capitalist economic theory and state intervention nobody succeeded in solving this particular contradiction, not even the single-minded and ruthless representatives of the "Radical Right" in business and government—nor indeed are they ever going to be able to do so. Thanks to its total monopoly of the material and means of production capital can subject the labor force to its imperatives—but only within limits now being approached as a historical trend. This is why the absurdity of the price that must be paid for the permanence of the prevailing conditions cannot be forever hidden beneath the mystifications of the idealized "market society."

The point is that in order to extricate itself from the difficulties of profitable expansion and accumulation globally competing capital tends to reduce to a profitable minimum "necessary labor time" (or the "labor cost of production"), thereby inevitably tending to transfom the workers into an increasingly *superfluous labor force.* But by doing so capital simultaneously also undermines the vital conditions of its own expanded reproduction. As can be read in Section 5.4 of *Beyond Capital*, neither the intensification of the rate of exploitation, nor the efforts to solve the problem by "globalization" and by the creation of ever greater monopolies can show a way out from this vicious circle. Thus the conditions necessary for securing and safeguarding the proper functioning of the system—a system of control *par excellence* or nothing—tend to escape from capital's control, raising the spectre of destructive uncontrollability in

the absence of a socialist alternative. The contradiction at work here is therefore a truly explosive one. This is what confers a real meaning on the self-serving concern of capital's personifications with the problem of "population explosion." As such it has a twofold meaning. On the one hand it indicates the unmanageable multiplication of the "superfluous labor force" of society, and on the other it points to the accumulation of the unstable explosive charge that inevitably goes with such developments.

IN RELATION TO ALL four sets of issues with which we are here concerned, two further points must be briefly made. First, that these absolute limits of the capital system activated under the present circumstances are not separate from but tendentially inherent from the very outset in the law of value. In this sense they correspond to the "maturation" or full assertion of the law of value under conditions marked by the closure of the progressive phase of capital's historical ascendancy. And vice versa, the progressive phase of capital's historical ascendancy can be said to come to its closure precisely because the global capital system as such reaches the absolute limits beyond which the law of value cannot be accommodated within its structural confines.

The second point is closely related to this circumstance. For once upon a time—as a matter of fact not that long ago—all four sets of determinations were positive constituents of capital's dynamic expansion and historical advancement; from the symbiotic relationship of capital with its national states to the forcefully self-sustaining use to which the system could put its characteristic (even if always problematical) way of dealing with the issues of equality and emancipation, and from mastering the forces of nature in the interest of its own productive development thoroughly unhindered by sobering external or internal limits (which would question its domination of nature) to the earlier quite unimaginable expanded reproduction not only of its own material assets and conditions of metabolic interchange and control but also the prodigious growth of the truly productive and within capital's parameters profitably sustainable labor force.

By contrast, the forbidding problem for the not too distant future is not simply that the type of dynamic expansionary relationships manifest in the past under all four sets of determination at issue cannot be positively sustained any longer. It is much worse than that. For under the now unfolding conditions of historical development all four sets of interacting forces represent not just an *absence* (which would be bad enough even by itself) but an *active hindrance* to undisturbed capital accumulation and to the future functioning of the global capital system. Accordingly, the threat of uncontrollability casts a very long shadow over all of the objective and subjective aspects of capital's historically unique mode of controlling humanity's continued social metabolic reproduction.

5. The Meaning of Black Mondays (and Wednesdays)

1995 Postscript to "The Present Crisis"

A FEW WEEKS AFTER the completion of this article—to be precise: on Monday, October 21, 1987—we were entertained with the spectacle of a big tumble on the world's stock exchanges.[44] This must have been part of the "healthy continuation of economic expansion," since it happened so soon after that reassuring statement made by the U.S. Federal Reserve governor at the time, Robert Heller. The aftermath of this event was also very interesting, and to the world of big business no doubt also reassuring. For the governments of the capitalistically advanced countries instituted some binding measures and the corresponding computer regulations, with a view to call a temporary halt to all stock market activity in the event of "excessive speculative transactions," in order to prevent the repetition of "Black Monday," as October 21, 1987, came to be known.

Strangely, all this had very little effect on the events leading to "Black Wednesday" in 1993, and the (pretended) "forced abandonment" of the European "Exchange Mechanism" by the British government. For the Bank of England always had the resources to eat speculative fund managers like George Soros for breakfast by the dozen. On this occasion, it was decided, instead, to reward his enterprise with $1 billion in exchange for the convenient excuse that Britain was "forced out" of the European system of monetary regulation, and therefore could not help breaking its treaty obligations. Naturally, the result of this move was an almost 30 percent devaluation of the pound sterling and with it the acquisition of a significant competitive advantage against the country's European partners—precisely what the Exchange Mechanism was designed to prevent—and an "export-led recovery" that has been

hailed ever since by the British government. The greatly devalued currency's competitive advantage helps a great deal—even if by no means forever—in the field of exports, although it refuses to deliver the frequently announced "full recovery" and "healthy expansion" for the economy as a whole.

Three years before Black Monday the sorrowful but for the financial world happy-ending tale of *Black Sunday* had hit the headlines. At that time

> the Bank of England was called into action to save an important institution when Johnson Matthey Bankers (JMB), the bullion trader, collapsed and had to be rescued by a Bank-organized lifeboat. That crisis broke on a Sunday and after holding a council of war with City elders, the Bank took JMB into *public ownership*. [45]

Unhappily for another important financial force, Barings Securities—one of the oldest banking institution in Britain, founded in 1772, and once described as the sixth great power of Europe, after Britain, France, Austria, Russia and Prussia—its disastrous collapse unfolded in February 1995 on a *Black Saturday,* followed by another *Black Sunday*.

> The crisis stunned senior City figures. Sir Michael Richardson, one of the Square Mile's [the London City's] most respected bankers, said last night: "This is the most devastating news, and one of the most serious things I have heard in ages."[46]

Barings, alas, could not be rescued. For the customary way of dealing with large-scale failures—by taking the enterprises concerned into "public ownership" (so much despised by the champions of privatization and market-idolatry), thereby "nationalizing" private capitalist bankruptcy whenever that suits the system's convenience—cannot always do the trick in the absence of a bottomless public purse. There was more than a touch of irony in the collapse of Barings, in that before its fate was sealed on the Singapore stock exchange "it had been weakened by heavy losses on its South American business, following the collapse of the Mexican peso." [47] Thus what was supposed to be one of the great historical advances of present-day capitalism—"modernizing globalization"—had gone sour not only in Mexico, with the most painful consequences for its people. It contributed at the same time also to the ignominious liquidation of one of the most venerable and bluest of blue City institutions.

Black Tuesday, by contrast, happened in the most unexpected place, even if it was fully in tune with the logic of capital. The dramatic day in question was everywhere

described as *Black Tuesday* when only after a few years of enjoying the blessings of "marketization" and monetary "convertibility" the Russian economy suffered a major shock—on 11 October 1994—through a catastrophic fall of the (already absurdly undervalued) rouble against the dollar. Thus by now we are not only witnessing the same kind of crises erupt, with discomforting frequency, even in the once financially sheltered corners of the world, but also seem to be running out of days of the week to be blackened, as befits the system.

THE DAY AFTER *BLACK MONDAY* a group of high-powered bankers and leading economists discussed the crisis on BBC television. One of them argued that the root cause of the disaster was the American debt and the failure to do something about it. Yet the most cynical of the City bankers hit the nail on the head when he rebutted that the one thing much more disastrous than not doing anything about the American debt would be to attempt to do something about it.

It is only right and proper that an economic system riddled with contradictions should find its guiding principles in the topsy-turvy world of apologetic economic wisdom. In a world of utmost financial insecurity nothing suits better the practice of gambling with astronomical and criminally unsecured sums on the world's stock exchanges—foreshadowing an earthquake of magnitude 9 or 10 on the financial Richter scale—than to call the enterprises that engage in such gambling "*Securities* Management," a fact highlighted by the demise of Barings Securities. In the same vein in which reckless gambling is served up as "security," one of the recent discoveries of "economic science" is called the *confidence coefficient,* which is supposed to measure and depict on a scientific graph—on the basis of the most fanciful hearsay and wishful thinking—the health and future prospects of the capitalist economy. An even more recent rejoinder of equal explanatory value is the much talked about *feel-good factor,* which is supposed to demonstrate by its non-arrival that everything is all right with the economy, when to every sane person matters are visibly and painfully wrong. Some high-flown and respectable sounding economic categories fully match the apologetic intent.

Thus we are mystified by the notions of *negative growth*—meaning *recession*—and *sustained negative growth,* equivalent to *depression*. In accord with these concepts even in dire trouble there can be nothing to worry about. In the meantime, the Japanese Nikkei average, which fell from its peak of 40,000 to around the perilous 14,000 level at the present—not in a single "Black Day," but over five years of "sustained negative growth"—is very near to precipitating a global financial crisis. Below 14,000 "many of the shares held by Japan's banks and insurers will be worth less than the institutions paid for them."[48] And that is where yet another "economic category" is supposed to

help. It is called *negative equity,* which translates into human language as being in the immediate vicinity of bankruptcy.

Many millions of mortgage holders all over the world share the privilege of negative equity with Japan's banks and other economic institutions, but they are most unlikely to derive any reassurance from such an exalted financial status. Already hundreds of thousands of them have lost their homes, and many more are being *repossessed*—for which there seems to be no soothing category in contemporary economic science—and refuse to "feel good" about it. As for Japan itself, the astronomical amount of negative equity possessed by its financial institutions has potentially disastrous economic consequences on account of the necessity to withdraw huge external capital funds, primarily from the United States. The repercussions of such a move would affect the whole of the global financial market.

The American hegemony discussed in this article was clamorously underlined with the implosion of the Soviet system, and, even if far from uncontested, remains a major determining factor for world economic development in the foreseeable future.

When exactly and in what form—of which there can be several, more or less directly brutal, varieties—the United States will default on its astronomical debt cannot be seen at this point in time. There can be only two certainties in this regard. The first is that the inevitability of the American default will deeply affect everyone on this planet. And the second, that the preponderant hegemonic power position of the United States will continue to be asserted in every way, so as to make the rest of the world pay for the American debt for as long as it is capable of doing so.

Two brief passages should illustrate the continued assertion of American hegemony. The first concerns the Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs):

> Not facing a debt crisis, the NICs have been able to avoid Structural Adjustment Programs [ruthlessly imposed on indebted "developing countries" by the United States]. They have not, however, been able to avoid the pressure of rollback. *Dark Victory* shows how the U.S. government has repeatedly used the threat of trade war to force NIC states to reduce their economic activity and open up their economies to U.S. imports and investment. The new GATT agreement is an important part of the U.S. offensive. Although promoted as a generalized free trade agreement, it is primarily designed to restrict state direction of economic activity.[49]

The second quotation reminds us of the constant pressure applied by the United States even on one of the economic giants of advanced capitalism, Germany, the same way as on Japan. As we learn from an editorial article of the *Financial Times:*

> Calls from Washington for smaller fiscal deficits must be intensely irritating to the Germans. U.S. policymakers have, after all, called for a fiscal boost by Germany almost every year since the G7 was formed. More irritating still, the U.S. has itself followed the most consistently profligate fiscal policy of the three major economies. If global interest rates are to fall—as, indeed, they must—the U.S. must put its own fiscal house in order.[50]

However, there is a limit to everything, even to U.S. profligacy. The limit in this respect is that the average gross public debt of the OECD economies has grown in just two decades—between 1974 and 1994—from *35 percent* to *71 percent.* Given the same trend of development, it will not take many decades before it will be unavoidable to actually "do something about" these intractable problems, disregarding the views of City bankers and other vested interests.

6. The Potentially Deadliest Phase of Imperialism

This study[51] is dedicated to Harry Magdoff and Paul Sweezy, whose contributions in the last fifty years—in their books and as editors of *Monthly Review*—to our awareness of imperialism and monopolistic developments has been second to none.

6.1 / ONE OF THE WEIGHTIEST contradictions and limitations of the capital system concerns the relationship between the globalizing tendency of transnational capital in the economic domain and the continued dominance of the national states as the comprehensive political command structure of the established order. In other words, notwithstanding all efforts of the dominant powers to make their own national states triumph over the others and thereby prevail as the state of the capital system as such, precipitating humankind in the course of such attempts into the bloodletting vicissitudes of two horrendous world wars in the twentieth century, the national state remained the ultimate arbiter of comprehensive socioeconomic and political decision-making as well as the real guarantor of the risks undertaken by all significant transnational economic ventures. Obviously, this is a contradiction of such magnitude that it cannot be assumed indefinitely to endure, whatever the endlessly repeated rhetoric pretending to resolve this contradiction through the discourse on "democracy and development" and its tempting corollary: "Think global, act local." This is why the question of imperialism must be brought to the forefront of critical attention.

Many years ago Paul Baran rightly characterized the radical change in the postwar international power relationships in the capitalist world and "the growing inability of the old imperialist nations to hold their own in face of the American quest for expanded influence and power," insisting that "the assertion of American supremacy

in the 'free' world implies the reduction of Britain and France (not to speak of Belgium, Holland and Portugal) to the status of junior partners of American imperialism."[52] He also quoted the bitterly sobering words of the London *Economist,* which pleaded with characteristic subservience that "we must learn that we are not the Americans' equals now, and cannot be. We have a right to state our minimum national interests and expect the Americans to respect them. But this done, we must look for their lead."[53] A similar plea for the acceptance of American leadership—but perhaps not yet fully resigned to handing over to the United States, in some form or other, the British Empire—was expressed a quarter of a century earlier by the London *Observer,* saying with enthusiasm about President Roosevelt that "America has found a man. In him the world must find a leader."[54]

And yet, the end of the British Empire—together with all the others—was already foreshadowed in Roosevelt's First Inaugural Address, which made it absolutely clear that as President of the United States he "shall spare no effort to *restore world trade by international economic readjustment."*[55] In the same spirit, a few years later he advocated the right "to trade in an atmosphere of *freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad."*[56] Thus the writing was on the wall for the British Empire from the beginning of Roosevelt's presidency, and the question of colonialism made the relationship with Churchill a very unhappy one for the latter. This was revealed in a partially "off the record" press briefing Roosevelt gave on his return from the Yalta Conference with Churchill and Stalin. Concerning the question of French Indo-China, Roosevelt proposed a transitional trusteeship before independence as the solution, so as to

> educate them for self-government. It took fifty years for us to do it in the Philippines. Stalin liked the idea. China [Chiang Kai-Shek] liked the idea. The British don't like it. It might bust up their empire, because if the Indo-Chinese work together and eventually get their independence, the Burmese might do the same thing to England.
>
> *Question:* Is that Churchill's idea on all territory out there, he wants them all back, just the way they were?
>
> *President:* Yes, he is mid-Victorian on all things like that.
>
> *Question:* This idea of Churchill's seems inconsistent with the policy of self-determination?
>
> *President:* Yes, that is true.
>
> *Question:* Do you remember the speech the Prime Minister made about the fact that he was not made Prime Minister of Great Britain to see the Empire fall apart?

> *President:* Dear old Winston will never learn on that point. He has made his speciality on that point. This, of course, is off the record.[57]

Naturally, in the advocated "international economic readjustment"—a demand in the first place arising from the 1929–33 Great World Crisis and rendered ever more imperative for America through the onset of another recession in the country just before the outbreak of the Second World War—the whole of the British Empire was at stake. Roosevelt believed that "India should be granted commonwealth status during the war and the choice of complete freedom five or ten years afterwards. The most galling suggestion, to old-line Britishers, was his proposal at Yalta that Hong Kong (as well as Dairen) be made into an international free port. His entire position seemed, in fact, naive and wrongheaded from the British point of view. They felt that he misrepresented the aims and results of royal imperialism. More important, they warned that breakup of the Empire would weaken the West in a world of 'power politics.' It would leave dangerous areas of confusion and strife—a 'power vacuum' into which potential aggressors (the Reds) could move."[58]

With the appearance of the incomparably more powerful imperialist competitor, the United States, the fate of the British Empire was sealed. This was made even more pressing and in the colonies deceptively appealing because Roosevelt could present his policies aimed at achieving American international supremacy with the rhetoric of freedom to all, and indeed even with a claim to universally acceptable "destiny." He did not hesitate to declare that "a better civilization than any we have known is in store for America and by our example, perhaps, for the world. Here destiny seems to have taken a long look."[59] That in no time at all after deriding the transparently imperialist ideological justifications of "old-line Britishers," the propaganda slogans of the latter were fully adopted as their own by the Americans, justifying their military interventions in Indo-China and elsewhere in the name of preventing the generation of a "power vacuum" and blocking the possibility of the "domino effect" (produced by "the Reds"), this could only surprise those who continued to nourish illusions about the "end of imperialism."

6.2 / TO UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUSNESS of the present situation we have to put it in a historical perspective. The early modern imperialist penetration of various parts of the globe was of a rather different kind when compared with the incomparably more extensive—as well as intensive—penetration of some leading capitalist powers into the rest of the world in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The contrast was forcefully underlined by Harry Magdoff:

> The same type of thinking that approaches the concept of economic imperialism in the restricted balance-sheet sense usually also confines the term to control (direct or indirect) by an industrial power over an underdeveloped country. Such a limitation ignores the essential feature of the new imperialism that arises in the late nineteenth century: the competitive struggle among the industrial nations for dominant positions with respect to the world market and raw material sources. The structural difference which distinguishes the new imperialism from the old is the replacement of an economy in which many firms compete by one in which a handful of giant corporations in each industry compete. Further, during this period, the advance of transportation and communication technology and the challenge to England by the newest industrial nations [like Germany] brought two additional features to the imperialist stage: the intensification of competitive struggle in the world arena and the maturation of a truly international capitalist system. Under these circumstances, the competition among groups of giant corporations and their governments takes place over the entire globe: in the markets of the advanced nations as well as in those of the semi-industrialized and non-industrialized nations.[60]

With the successful imposition of American hegemony in the postwar world—with its roots in the period of Roosevelt's first presidency—we have been subjected to a third phase in the development of imperialism, with the gravest possible implications for the future. For now the catastrophic dangers that would go with a global conflagration, as experienced in the past, are self-evident even to the most uncritical defenders of the system. At the same time, no one in his or her right mind could exclude the possibility of the eruption of a deadly conflict, and with that the destruction of humankind. Yet nothing is really done to resolve the underlying massive contradictions that point in that fateful direction. On the contrary, the continued enhancement of the economic and military hegemony of the one remaining superpower—the United States of America—casts an ever darkening shadow on the future.

We have reached a new historical stage in the transnational development of capital: one in which it is no longer possible to avoid facing up to a fundamental contradiction and structural limitation of the system. That is, its grave failure to constitute the state of the capital system as such, as complementary to its transnational aspirations and articulation, so as to overcome thereby the explosive antagonisms between national states that characterized the system in constantly aggravated form in the last two centuries. Capitalist rhetoric even at its best, as successfully practiced by Roosevelt in a situation of emergency, can be no substitute in this respect. Roosevelt's rhetoric—nostalgically remembered by many intellectuals on the left in the United

States even today—was relatively successful precisely because it responded to a situation of emergency.[61] Although it greatly overstated the universal validity of the advocated actions and even more heavily understated or quite simply misrepresented the empire-building American elements, there was nevertheless some communality of interests both in addressing the symptoms of the world economic depression (if not their *causes,* which tended to be reduced to "bad morals" equated with "bad economics" and to the actions of "blindly selfish men")[62] and in the U.S. participation in defeating Hitler's Germany. Today, by contrast, instead of the best rhetoric of the New Deal years we are bombarded with the worst kind: a cynical camouflage of reality that presents the most blatant U.S. imperialist interests as the universal panacea of *multiparty democracy,* the tendentiously selective advocacy of *human rights* (which can happily accommodate, among many others, the Turkish genocide against the Kurds, or the extermination of half a million Chinese in Indonesia at the time of installing Suharto, and of hundreds of thousands of people in East Timor later on by the same U.S. client regime), and the once denounced "domination by monopolies at home and abroad" as the *free market.*

Today "the competition among groups of giant corporations and their governments" has a major qualifier: the overwhelming power of the United States, dangerously bent on assuming the role of the state of the capital system as such, subsuming under itself by all means at its disposal all of the rival powers. The fact that this objective cannot be successfully accomplished on a lasting basis represents no deterrent to the forces ruthlessly pushing for its realization. And the problem is not simply some subjective misconception. As with every major contradiction of the given system, objective conditions make it imperative to pursue now the strategy of hegemonic domination by one economic and military superpower, at whatever cost, to try to overcome the structural cleavage between transnational capital and national states. However, the very nature of the underlying contradiction foreshadows the necessary failure of this strategy in the longer run. There have been many attempts to address the issue of potential conflagrations and the way of remedying them, from Kant's dream about the perpetual-peace-producing League of Nations to the institutional establishment of such a League after the First World War, and from the solemnly declared principles of the Atlantic Charter to making operational the United Nations organization; they all proved to be woefully inadequate to the envisaged task. And no wonder. For the failure of instituting a "World Government" on the basis of the established mode of social metabolic reproduction arises from the fact that here we are facing one of the absolute, untranscendable limits of the capital system itself. It goes without saying in this regard, that the failure of labor's structural antagonist is very far from being a cause for comfort.

6.3 / IMPERIALIST DOMINATION IS, of course, nothing new in American history, even if it has been justified as "fifty years of educating the Filipino people for self-government," in President Roosevelt's words (not to forget well over fifty years of "further education" through the agency of U.S. proxies like Marcos and his successors). As Daniel B. Schirmer emphasized in his penetrating and meticulously documented book on the short-lived anti-imperialist movement in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century:

> The Vietnam War is only the last, most prolonged and most brutal of a series of United States interventions in the affairs of other peoples. The invasion of Cuba sponsored by United States authorities failed at the Bay of Pigs, but intervention has been more effective on other occasions, as in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, British Guiana, Iran and the Congo. Nor is the list complete; other colonial peoples (and some European as well) have felt the effects of aggressive American intrusion upon their domestic policies, whether or not in the form of outright violence. . . . Present-day policies of counter-insurgency and intervention have their source in events that occurred at the opening of the twentieth century. Then the United States defeated Spain in war and stripped her of colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific, taking Puerto Rico outright, giving Cuba nominal independence, and annexing the Philippines after first suppressing a nationalist revolution in those islands by force. What particularly distinguishes modern foreign policy from the Mexican war and the Indian wars for most of their span is that it is the product of another era in American history and comes in response to decisively different social pressures. Modern foreign policy is associated with the rise of the large-scale corporation, industrial and financial, as the dominant economic force in the country, exerting a most powerful influence upon the government of the United States. The Spanish-American war and the war to subdue Aguinaldo and the Philippine insurgents were the first foreign wars conducted as a consequence of this influence, the first wars of modern corporate America.[63]

When President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the strategy of "international economic readjustments" in his First Inaugural Address, his move indicated a determination to work for the dissolution of all colonial empires, not only the British. Like other major historical departures, this approach also had its predecessor several decades earlier. In fact it was closely connected with the Open Door Policy declared at the turn of the century. The so-called Open Door, demanded from other countries, envisaged economic penetration (in contrast to direct colonial military occupation), keeping

characteristically quiet about the overwhelming political domination that went with it. No wonder, therefore, that many people called the policy utterly hypocritical. When in 1899, in the name of such policy, the United States declined to establish a colonial enclave in China, alongside the others as their equal, it was not due to liberal enlightenment or to democratic compassion. The opportunity was turned down because—as the most dynamic articulation of capital by that time—the United States wanted the whole of China, in due course, for itself. Such design became absolutely clear in the course of subsequent historical developments, reaching down all the way into our own time.

However, accomplishing world domination through "Open Door" policy—given the relation of forces in the overall configuration of the major imperialist powers—was hopelessly premature at the turn of the century. One needed the frightful bloodletting of the First World War, as well as the unfolding of the grave world economic crisis after the short-lived period of reconstruction, before the Rooseveltian version of the strategy could be "softly-softly" announced. Moreover, it needed an even greater bloodletting in the Second World War, coupled with the emergence of the United States in the course of that war as by far the greatest economic power, before the implementation of the Rooseveltian strategy could be forcefully attempted toward the end and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. The only remaining major complication—the existence of the Soviet system (since the additional complicating factor of China materialized with finality only in 1949)—was considered strictly temporary. This view was confidently asserted in the numerous declarations of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles concerning the policy of "rolling back communism."

Thus in the course of twentieth-century developments we have reached a point where the side-by-side existence—and competitive coexistence—of imperialist powers can no longer be tolerated, no matter how much lip-service is paid to the "multicentral world." As Paul Baran rightly argued already in 1957, the proud owners of former colonial empires had been cut down in size to play the role of "junior partners of American imperialism." When the future of imperial possessions was discussed toward the end of the war, British concerns were swept aside as the hopelessly mid-Victorian notions of "dear-old Winston." At the same time de Gaulle was not even consulted,[64] not to mention the Belgian, the Dutch and the Portuguese, who did not even enter the picture. All talk about the "multi-central world," under the principle of some sort of interstate equality, belongs to the realm of pure fantasy, if not to that of cynical ideological camouflage. Of course, there is nothing surprising about that. For "pluralism" in the world of capital can only mean the *plurality of capitals,* which cannot concede any consideration of equality. On the contrary, it is always characterized by the most iniquitous pecking order of structural hierarchies and corresponding

power relations, favoring always the stronger in their quest to gobble up the weaker. Thus given the inexorability of capital's logic, it was only a question of time before the unfolding dynamism of the system had to reach the stage at the level of interstate relations when one hegemonic superpower had to overrule all of the less powerful ones, no matter how big, and assert its—ultimately unsustainable and for humanity as a whole most perilous—exclusive claim to being the state of the capital system as such.

6.4 / MOST SIGNIFICANT IN THIS respect is the attitude assumed in relation to the question of national interests. On the one hand, their legitimacy is forcefully asserted when the issues at stake affect, directly or indirectly, the presumed interests of the United States, not hesitating to use even the most extreme forms of military violence, or the threat of such violence, to impose their arbitrary decisions on the rest of the world. On the other hand, legitimate national interests of other countries are arrogantly dismissed as intolerable "nationalism," and even as "ethnic pandaemonium."[65] At the same time, the United Nations and other international organizations are treated as a plaything of the United States, and defied with utmost cynicism when their resolutions are not palatable to the guardians of the more or less openly declared U.S. national interests. Examples are countless. About some recent ones Noam Chomsky sharply commented: "The highest authorities explained with brutal clarity that the World Court, the UN, and other agencies had become irrelevant because they no longer follow US orders, as they did in early postwar years. . . . Under Clinton the defiance of world order has become so extreme as to be of concern even to hawkish policy analysts."[66] To add insult to injury, the United States refuses to pay its huge debt of United Nations membership arrears, while imposing its policies on the organization, including the cuts of funds for the chronically underfunded World Health Organization. This blatant obstructionism was noted even by such establishment figures as Jeffrey Sachs whose devotion to the cause of U.S.-dominated "market economy" is beyond doubt. He wrote in a recent article: "The failure of the United States to pay its UN dues is surely the world's most significant default on international obligations. . . . America has systematically squeezed the budgets of UN agencies, including such vital ones as the World Health Organization."[67]

It is also necessary to mention here the efforts—both ideological and organizational—invested in bypassing the national framework of decision-making. The superficially tempting slogan "Think global, act local" is an interesting case in point. For obviously the people in general, who are deprived of all meaningful power of decision-making on a broader scale (other than the abdicating electoral ritual), might find it just feasible to intervene in some way at the strictly local level. Moreover, no one could deny the potential importance of appropriate local action. However, the "global" to which

we are expected to pay uncritical attention—meekly subscribing to the theses about the "powerlessness of national governments" and the "inevitability of multinational globalization," which tendentiously misdescribe the *national transnational* corporations (heavily dominated by the United States) as multinational and thereby universally acceptable—is totally vacuous without its complex relations to the particular national communities. Besides, once the "global" is divorced from its embeddedness in its manifold national setting, diverting attention from the intertwined contradictory interstate relations, also the "local" within which one is expected to act becomes utterly myopic and ultimately meaningless.[68] If "democracy" is thus confined to such decapitated "local action," in that case the "global decision-making and action" that inevitably affects the life of every single individual can be exercised in the most authoritarian fashion by the dominant economic and political forces—and of course predominantly the United States—in accord with the position occupied by them in the global pecking order of capital. The funds invested by the World Bank and other U.S.-dominated organizations in trying to enhance the "local" at the expense of the national, attempting to enlist the support of academic and other intellectual elites through well-sponsored conferences and research projects (especially but not exclusively in the Third World), indicate a design to create a "World Government" that effectively sidesteps the potentially most troublesome decision-making processes of the intermediary national level, with its unavoidable recalcitrance, and to legitimate the blatantly authoritarian domination of social life by a "World Government" ruthlessly imposed from above in the name of the fictitious "democracy" synonymous with the pretended "local action" of "regular rubbish collections," as the *Economist* put it.

6.5 / THE MANIFESTATIONS OF U.S. economic imperialism are too numerous to be listed here, and many of them are well known enough not to need much comment. I have discussed in the past some of the salient issues, including those against which even Conservative politicians had to protest, like "technology transfer regulations, American protection laws, extra-territorial controls coordinated through the Pentagon and protected by Congress,"[69] and also "funds channeled into the largest and richest companies on earth [in such a way that if the ongoing process continues] unchecked it will buy its way through sector after sector of the world's advanced technologies."[70] I have also discussed in the same article "industrial advantage from military secrecy," "direct trade pressures applied by the U.S. legislative and executive," and "the real debt problem"[71] in the world—that is, the astronomical debt of the United States itself, imposed by the dominant imperialist power on the rest of the world, for as long as the latter can continue to pay for it. Regarding protests against "dollar imperialism," they are often voiced, but to no avail. The economic imperialism

of the country remains secure for as long as the United States retains its overwhelmingly dominant position not only through the dollar as the privileged world economic currency, but also in ruling all of the international organs of economic interchange, from the IMF to the World Bank and from GATT to its successor, the World Trade Organization. Today in France many people protest against "American economic imperialism" on accont of the punitive tariffs recently imposed on them by the United States under the pretended independent judgment of the WTO. The same kind of measures were unceremoniously imposed on Japan several times in the past, ending as a rule with the reluctant or willing submission by the Japanese authorities to the American dictates. If in the last round of punitive tariffs imposed on Europe Britain was treated somewhat more leniently, that was only as a reward for the total servility of the current British "New Labour" government toward all orders coming from Washington. But even so, the skirmishes of an international trade war, which we have witnessed in the past and are repeatedly treated to in our own days, reveal a very serious trend with far-reaching potential consequences for the future.

Similarly, the prepotent intervention of U.S. governmental agencies in the field of high technology, both military and civil, cannot be assumed to endure indefinitely. In a crucial area—computer technology, both hardware and software—the situation is extremely serious. To mention only one case, Microsoft enjoys an almost completely monopolistic position in the world, whereby its software carries massive implications for the acquisition of the most suitable hardware. But well beyond that, it has been brought to light a short while ago that a secret code embedded in Microsoft software enables the U.S. security and military services to spy on everybody in the world who uses Microsoft Windows and the Internet.

Also in another, literally vital, area: the production of genetically modified foods by giant transnational corporations like Monsanto, the U.S. government is doing everything it can behind the scenes in order to ram down the throats of the rest of the world the products whose adoption—compelling agriculturalists everywhere to buy again and again the non-renewable seeds from Monsanto—would secure absolute domination for the United States in the field of agriculture. The attempts to patent genes for U.S. corporations serve a similar purpose.

On the other hand, the conflicts over "intellectual property rights,"[72] which the United States tries to impose on the rest of the world through the agency of the WTO—aimed at securing among other things (including vast economic interests) the permanent domination of world cinema and television by the third- and even tenth-rate Hollywood products with which we are constantly flooded—pinpoint another matter of great importance, generating cries of "U.S. cultural imperialism." At the same time, the phenomenally well financed "business culture imperialism," in

the form of pushing the penetration of the U.S. army of "management consultancy" everywhere in the world, is part of the same picture.

But perhaps the most serious of the ongoing trends of economic and cultural domination is the rapacious and frightfully wasteful way the United States grabs for itself the world's energy and prime material resources: *25 percent of them for just 4 percent of the world's population,* with immense and relentlessly accumulating damage to the environmental conditions of human survival. And that is not all. For, in the same vein, the United States continues its active sabotage of all international efforts aimed at introducing some form of control in order to limit, and perhaps by 2012 to some degree reduce, the ongoing catastrophic trend of environmental damage, no longer deniable even by the worst apologists of the system.

6.6 / THE MILITARY DIMENSION OF all this is grave. It is therefore no exaggeration to say—also in view of the formerly quite unimaginable destructive power of armaments accumulated in the second half of the twentieth century—that we have entered the most dangerous phase of imperialism in all history. For what is at stake today is not the control of a particular, no matter how large, part of the planet, putting at a disadvantage but still tolerating the independent actions of some rivals, but the control of its totality by one hegemonic economic and military superpower, with all means—even the most extreme authoritarian and, if needed, violent military ones—at its disposal. This is what the ultimate rationality of globally developed capital requires, in its vain attempt to bring under control its irreconcilable antagonisms. The trouble is, though, that such rationality—which can be written without quotation marks, since it genuinely corresponds to the logic of capital at the present historical stage of global development—is at the same time the most extreme form of irrationality in history, including the Nazi conception of world domination, as far as the conditions required for the survival of humanity are concerned.

When Jonas Salk refused to patent his discovery, the polio vaccine, insisting that it would be like wanting "to patent the sun," he could not imagine that the time would come when capital would have to attempt to do just that, trying to patent not only the sun but also the air, even if that had to be coupled with dismissing any concern about the mortal dangers that such aspirations and actions carried with them for human survival. For the ultimate logic of capital in its processes of decision-making can only be of a *categorically authoritarian* "top-down" variety, from the microcosms of small economic enterprises to the highest levels of political and military decision-making. But how can one *enforce* the patents taken out on the sun and the air?

There are two prohibitive obstacles in this regard, even if capital—in its drive to demolish its own untranscendable limits—must refuse to acknowledge them. The

first is that the *plurality of capitals* cannot be eliminated, no matter how inexorable and brutal the monopolistic trend of development manifest in the system. And the second, that the corresponding *plurality of social labor* cannot be eliminated, so as to turn the total labor force of humankind, with all its national and sectional varieties and divisions, into the mindless "obedient servant" of the hegemonically dominant section of capital. For labor in its insurmountable plurality can never abdicate its right of access to the air and the sun; and even less can it survive for capital's continued benefit—an absolute must for this mode of controlling social metabolic reproduction—without the sun and the air.

Those who say that today imperialism does not involve the military occupation of territory, not only underrate the dangers we face but also accept the most superficial and misleading appearances as the substantive defining characteristics of imperialism in our time, ignoring both history and the contemporary trends of development. For one thing, the U.S. militarily occupies territory in no less than *69 countries* through its military bases: a number that continues to expand with the enlargement of NATO. Those bases are not there for the benefit of the people—the grotesque ideological justification—but for the sole benefit of the occupying power, so as to be able to dictate policies as it pleases.

In any case, regarding the direct military occupation of colonial territories in the past, their extent could only be partial. Otherwise how could the small population of England have ruled the incomparably larger population and territories of its immense empire, above all India? Nor was such disproportionality an exclusive characteristic of the British Empire. As Renato Constantino reminded us in relation to the Philippines:

> From its inception, Spanish colonization operated more through religion than through force, thus profoundly affecting consciousness. This enabled the authorities to impose tributes, forced labor and conscription despite the small military force. Without the work of the priests, this would have been impossible. The priests became the pillars of the colonial establishment; so much so that it became a clerical boast that "in each friar in the Philippines the king had a captain general and a whole army." The molding of consciousness in the interest of colonial control was to be repeated on another plane by the Americans who after a decade of massive repression operated likewise through consciousness, this time using education and other cultural institutions.[73]

China, another vitally important example, was never militarily occupied, except for a small part of its territory, not even when the Japanese invaded it with massive military force. Yet for a long time before that the country was completely dominated

by foreign powers. So much so that the young Mao sarcastically commented, "When the foreigner farts it must be hailed as heavenly perfume." What mattered in all imperialist ventures was always the ability to impose dictates on the dominated country on a continuing basis, using punitive military interventions only when the "normal" way of ruling was challenged. The famous expression "gunboat diplomacy" well encapsulated what was feasible and practicable with the available military resources.

The principal characteristics of such imperialist domination remain with us. The multiplication of the destructive power of the military arsenal available today—especially the catastrophic potential of aerial weapons—has to some extent modified the forms of imposing imperialist dictates on a country to be subdued, but not their substance. In all probability the ultimate form of threatening the adversary in the future—the new "gunboat diplomacy" exercised from the "patented air"—will be the *nuclear blackmail*. But its objective would be analogous to those of the past, and its envisaged modality could only underline the absurd untenability of trying to impose capital's ultimate rationality on the recalcitrant parts of the world in that way. Also today, it is quite inconceivable to occupy the whole of China, with its 1.25 billion people, and keep it occupied even by the largest economically sustainable outside military force. Not that such inconceivability would deter from their imperialist aims the most extreme adventurists who can envisage no alternative to their world domination while the "more sober" ones—who in the end are not less dangerous—envisage strategic moves aimed at attempting to break up China, with the help of "free market" ideology, into fragments controllable from the hegemonic center of global capitalism.

It is self-evident that military forces must be economically sustained, which makes them always confined to limited enterprises both in the size of the military machines themselves and in the time span of their operations. The historical record of past imperialist ventures shows that by the time they are vastly extended—as the French in Indochina and then in Algeria, and later on the United States in Vietnam—the failure of the ventures in question stares them in the face, even if it may take quite some time to disengage from them. With regard to the countless U.S. military imperialist operations of the past, we have to recall not only the Philippines, as well as the failed large-scale war of intervention in Vietnam,[74] but also Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, British Guiana, Grenada, Panama and the Congo, as well as some military operations in other countries, from the Middle East and from the Balkans to various parts of Africa. One of the favorite ways of making U.S. imperial interests prevail was always the overthrow of unpalatable governments and the imposition of dictators totally dependent on the new master, so as to rule through these well-controlled dictators the countries in question. Here we are talking about Marcos and Pinochet, Suharto and the Brazilian Generals, Somosa and the South Vietnamese puppet generals of the

United States, not to forget the Greek colonels (called "sons of a bitch" by Lyndon Johnson)[75] and Mobutu (called in a curious sort of praise "our son of a bitch"[76] by a high-ranking State Department official). The contempt with which U.S. government figures ordered about their servants in the countries under their military domination, while cynically representing them for public consumption as champions of the "Free World," is clear enough in both instances just mentioned.

6.7 / THE ONSET OF CAPITAL'S structural crisis in the 1970s has produced important changes in the posture of imperialism. This is what made it necessary to adopt an increasingly more aggressive and adventurist stand, despite the rhetoric of conciliation, and later even the absurd propaganda notion of the "New World Order," with its never maintained promise of a "peace dividend." Contrary to some assertions, it would be quite wrong to attribute these changes to the implosion of the Soviet system, although it is undoubtedly true that the Cold War and the presumed Soviet military threat was very successfully used in the past for justifying the unbridled expansion of what General Eisenhower, toward the end of his presidency, warningly called "the military-industrial complex." The challenges calling for the adoption of a more aggressive—and ultimately adventurist—stand were there well before the collapse of the Soviet system. I described them in 1983 (i.e., eight years before the Soviet implosion) as follows:

- the end of the colonial regime in Mozambique and Angola;
- the defeat of white racism and the transfer of power to ZANU in Zimbabwe;
- the collapse of the U.S. client regime run by the Colonels in Greece and the subsequent victory of Andreas Papandreou's PASOK;
- the disintegration of Somosa's lifelong, U.S.-backed rule in Nicaragua and the striking victory of the Sandinista Front;
- armed liberation struggles in El Salvador and elsewhere in Central America and the end of the erstwhile easy control of the region by U.S. imperialism;
- the total bankruptcy—not only figuratively but also in a literal sense—of "metropolitan"-inspired and dominated "developmental strategies" all over the world, and the eruption of massive structural contradictions in all three principal industrial powers in Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, and even oil-rich Mexico;
- the dramatic and total disintegration of the Shah's regime in Iran and with it a major defeat of long established U.S. strategies in the region, calling into existence *desperately dangerous substitute strategies*—to be implemented *directly or by proxy*—ever since.[77]

What has changed after the collapse of the Soviet system was the need to find justification for the increasingly more aggressive posture of U.S. imperialism in different parts of the world, especially after the disappointments encountered in trying to revitalize Western capital through the economically sustainable restoration of capitalism—in contrast to the relative but still unstable successes in manipulating the state political machinery through Western "aid"—in the former Soviet Union. The "desperately dangerous substitute strategies implemented directly or by proxy" (see note 77) became prominent in the years preceding and following the Soviet implosion. But the appearance of such dangerous adventurist strategies could not be attributed, as some people think, to the fateful weakening of the Cold War adversary. Rather, the Soviet collapse itself is intelligible only as an integral part of the ongoing structural crisis of the capital system as such.

The Shah as an American proxy—as well as a presumed guarantor against the danger of a new Mossadeq—served his purpose by ruthlessly controlling his people and by buying massive quantities of arms from the West as the means to do so. Once he was gone, another proxy had to be found in order to destroy the antagonist who was talking about the "American Satan." Saddam Hussein's Iraq seemed to fit the bill, armed to the teeth by the United States and other Western countries. But Iraq had failed to destroy Iran and became disposable as an element of instability in a most unstable region of the world as defined by U.S. imperialist strategy. Moreover, Saddam Hussein as the former U.S. proxy could serve a greater purpose by being promoted to the status of the mythical all-powerful enemy who represents not only the danger attributed in Cold War days to the Soviet Union, but much more than that, threatening with chemical and biological warfare—and also with a nuclear holocaust—the whole of the Western world. Given this mythical enemy, we were expected to justify not only the Gulf War, but also several major military interventions in Iraq since then, as well as the callous killing of one million of its children through the sanctions imposed on the country as a result of U.S. dictates, shamefully accepted by our "great democracies," which continue to boast about their "ethical foreign policies."

But all this is not enough to scratch the surface of the chronic instability even in the region of the Middle East, let alone in the rest of the world. Those who think that present-day imperialism does not require territorial occupation should think again. Military occupation for an indefinite length of time is already in evidence in parts of the Balkans—also admitted to be an "indefinite commitment"—and who can show any reason why similar military territorial occupations should not follow in the future in other parts of the world? The ongoing trends are ominous and the deepening crisis of the system can only make them worse.

We have witnessed in the past two extremely dangerous developments in the ideology and organizational framework of U.S. imperialism. The first concerns NATO. Not simply its significant expansion toward the east, which may be considered by the Russian authorities a threat, if not today then some time in the future. But even more important, the aims and objectives of the organization have been radically redefined, in contradiction to international law, transforming it from what used to be claimed in the past to constitute a *purely defensive* military association into a potentially most aggressive *offensive* alliance, which can do what it pleases without any reference to a lawful authority—or, rather, it can do what the United States pleases and orders it to do. At the May 1999 NATO summit in Washington the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, under American pressure, "adopted a new strategic concept, by which they said they can resort to military action even outside the NATO area, without caring about the sovereignty of other countries and in disregard of the United Nations."[78] What is also highly significant in this respect is that the ideological justification of the new, unmistakably aggressive, posture—offered in the form of twenty-four *risk factors*—is transparently shaky. It is even admitted that "out of the *twenty-four risk factors only five* can be considered to represent real military danger."[79]

The second dangerous recent development—almost completely ignored in the West, sadly even on the left[80]—concerns the new Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, which has been characteristically railroaded through the Japanese houses of parliament (the Diet and the upper House of Counsellors). In this regard, too, the new developments cynically defy international law, and also violate the Japanese constitution. As an important Japanese political leader, Tetsuzo Fuwa,[81] commented: "The dangerous nature of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty has evolved to the extent of possibly dragging Japan into U.S. wars, challenging the Japanese Constitution which renounces war. Behind this is the extremely dangerous *U.S. preventive strike strategy* by which the U.S. will interfere in another country and arbitrarily attack any country it dislikes."[82] It goes without saying, the intended position assigned to Japan in the "preventive strike strategy," in which the orders emanate from Washington, is to play the role of *cannon fodder,* generously contributing at the same time to the financial costs of military operations,[83] as they were compelled to do also in the case of the Gulf War.

One of the most sinister aspects of these developments came to light recently through the forced resignation of the Japanese vice defense minister, Shingo Nishimura, for "jumping the gun" and aggressively advocating that Japan should arm itself with nuclear weapons. And he went even further, projecting in an interview the use of military force, with reference to the disputed Senkaku Islands. He declared that "Should diplomacy fail to settle the dispute, the Defense Agency will tackle it." As an editorial article of the journal *Akahata* pointed out:

> The real problem here is that a politician who openly argued for the nuclear armament of Japan and the use of military force as means to solve international disputes was given a cabinet seat. It is natural that other Asian nations have expressed grave concern over the matter. What is more, under a secret agreement with the U.S. government, LDP governments have gutted the three non-nuclear principles (not to possess, manufacture, or allow nuclear weapons to be brought into Japan). Moreover, the recent "emergency legislation" is aimed at giving military operations by the U.S. forces and the SDF [Self-Defense Force] priority in the event of war by mobilizing for war cooperation, commandeering commodities, land sites, buildings, and controlling ships, aircraft and electric waves. Such legislation will undermine the Constitution.[84]

Naturally, the new aggressive posture of the "U.S.-Japan Security Treaty" is justified in the name of the necessities of Japanese defense. In truth, however, the "common defense" claimed in the legitimating report has nothing to do with "defending Japan" against a fictitious "aggressor," but everything to do with the protection and enhancement of U.S. imperialist interests. "The U.S. use their bases in Japan, including those in Okinawa, to carry out military intervention in politically unstable situations in South East Asian countries, including Indonesia. In May last year, when the Suharto regime went down in Indonesia, U.S. Army Special Forces units suddenly returned to the U.S. Torii Station in Yomitan village, Okinawa, via U.S. Kadena Base in Okinawa. They had trained the special forces of the Indonesian Armed Forces (ABRI) which suppressed demonstrations in the country. The sudden return of the U.S. Army Special units Forces indicated the secret activity that U.S. Green Beret units in Okinawa had engaged in in Indonesia."[85]

The way in which these dangerous policies and practices are imposed on the countries whose "democratic" governments meekly submit to all U.S. dictates speaks for itself. As a rule the changes are not even discussed in the respective parliaments, instead bypassing them through secret treaties and protocols. And in the same spirit of cynical evasion, when for some reason they appear on the parliamentary agenda, they are bulldozed through, dismissing in the most authoritarian fashion all opposition. The politicians who in this way continue to "sow dragon seeds," seem to be oblivious to the danger of real dragons appearing on the historical stage in due course. Nor do they seem to understand or admit that the devastating flame of the nuclear dragons is not confined to a given locality—the Middle or the Far East, for instance—but can engulf absolutely everything on this planet, including the United States and Europe.

6.8 / THE ULTIMATE TARGET OF the projected "U.S. preventive strikes strategy" is, of course, China. Commenting on the aggressive noises and leaks in Washington against China in the aftermath of the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, "Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, of the Center for Defense Information, an independent think tank, said: 'There is a demonization of China going on here. I am not sure who is doing it, but these leaks are orchestrated to show China as the yellow peril.'"[86]

The bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade was at first presented and justified by NATO spokesmen as an "inevitable, even if regrettable, accident." When later it became undeniable that the embassy was not hit by a stray bomb but by rockets from three different directions, hence it must have been carefully targeted, Washington produced a fairy-tale explanation: the CIA could not obtain an up-to-date map of Belgrade, available to everybody else in any corner shop. But even with that, the mystery remained complete as to what was so important and legitimate about the claimed prehistoric target that once was supposed to have occupied the space filled by the Chinese Embassy. We are still waiting for some credible answers, which will obviously never come. A rational explanation that could come to mind is that the operation was designed as a testing ground, in two respects. First, to test the way the Chinese government would respond to such acts of aggression, compelling it to swallow the humiliation that went with them. And second, perhaps more important: to test the response of world public opinion, which proved to be utterly meek and compliant.

The problems deeply affecting U.S.-China relations could not be more serious. In one sense they arise from the inconvenient fact that "*the party-state has still not found a place in the free market world.*"[87] When global hegemonic imperialism uses as its ideological legitimation the concepts of "democracy" and "free market," any departure from such an ideology—backed by a major economic and military power—represents a serious challenge. And what makes the challenge quite intolerable is the prospect of economic developments to the disadvantage of the United States, given the comparable present rates of expansion, coupled with the fact that China's population is by a staggering *one thousand million* greater than that of the United States. As the same article puts it, reflecting great concerns about the ongoing developments: "*By 2020 China's economy alone would be three times that of the U.S.*"[88] It is not too difficult to imagine the alarm raised by such prospects in U.S. ruling circles.

True to its apologetic role, the *Economist* tries to put a glaze of respectability on the advocated military readiness and preparedness to die for "democracy" and for the "free market." In an article on "The New Geopolitics" it calls for the acceptance of piling up "body bags." Not by the United States, of course, but by what the *Economist*

calls the "local assistants" of the United States. With boundless hypocrisy the *Economist* speaks of a necessary "moral commitment" to war by the democracies, asking them in the name of that morality to accept that "war is a time of dying as well as of killing." To be the devoted "local assistant" of the United States is the role assigned to Japan, justified in view of the projected Chinese threat. The serious opposition in the country to the redefined and dangerously expanded U.S.-Japan Security Treaty is characterized as "nervousness." Happily, China will make the Japanese see sense and strengthen their resolve. For "a growing China will also make a nervous Japan readier to cling on to its alliance with America." The same role of a devoted local assistant is assigned to Turkey and, expressing the *Economist*'s hope, also to India, arguing that "the armies of allied countries whose people do not mind their soldiers doing the *face-to-face work* [i.e., dying] may come to the rescue; this is why Turkey matters to the alliance,[89] and why one day it may be a good idea to ask for India's help." In this scheme of things Russia, too, will occupy an actively pro-American place, thanks to its projected unavoidable opposition to China. "Worried about the vulnerability of its eastern territories, Russia may at last choose to put some substance into its flimsy Partnership-for-Peace links with NATO." The characterization of countries as "nervous" and "worried"—if not today then tomorrow—is all on account of their expected conflicts with the "rising giant of the east," China. In the "new geopolitics," China is presented as the common denominator of all trouble, and simultaneously as the solution cementing all the "worried" and "nervous" into an "Alliance for Democracy" and a "Partnership-for-Peace," which "might even draw a democratic India [a traditionally non-aligned country] into a new, South Asian version of the Partnership-for-Peace"[90] under the United States. We are not told, however, that we shall live happily ever after, or indeed live at all.

Naturally, this kind of doctrine, inspired by Washington, is not confined to the London *Economist*. It had found its spokesmen also in the Far East, where Australia's prime minister, John Howard, proclaimed the "Howard Doctrine" of how to fulfill the role of the faithful U.S. "local assistant" by his own country. To the consternation of Southeast Asian political opinion he declared that "Australia will act as the United States' 'deputy sheriff' in regional peacekeeping."[91] Malaysia's opposition leader, Lim Kit Siang, responded to this idea by saying that "Mr. Howard had done more than any previous Australian prime minister to damage Australia's relations with Asia since the 'White Australia' policy was abolished in the 1960s."[92] However, it was Hadi Soesastro, an American-educated Indonesian academic, who hit the nail on the head by pointing out that "it is always the deputy sheriff who gets killed."[93] Indeed. That is precisely the role of the U.S. "local assistants": to kill and to get killed for the cause handed down to them from above.

Marx wrote in his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that historical events often appear twice, in contrasting forms: first, as a (Napoleonic) *tragedy,* and later as the *farce* of "*Napoléon le petit.*" The role assigned to Japan in the recently revised, unconstitutional U.S.-Japan Security Treaty could only produce a major tragedy in Southeast Asia, and an equally tragic devastation to Japan itself. As to the muscle-flexing "U.S. deputy sheriff" role proclaimed in the "Howard Doctrine," that can be only described as the farce eagerly running ahead of the tragedy.

6.9 / THE HISTORY OF IMPERIALISM shows three distinctive phases:

1. Early modern *colonial empire-building imperialism,* brought about through the expansion of some European countries in the relatively easily penetrable parts of the world;
2. *"Redistributive" imperialism,* antagonistically contested by the major powers on behalf of their quasi-monopolistic corporations, called by Lenin "the highest stage of capitalism," involving only a few real contenders and some smaller survivors from the past hanging on their coat-tails, coming to an end in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War; and
3. *Global hegemonic imperialism,* with the United States as its overpowering force, foreshadowed by Roosevelt's version of the "Open Door Policy," with its pretenses of democratic equity, and—though consolidated soon after the Second World War—becoming sharply pronounced with the onset of the capital system's structural crisis in the 1970s, and with it the imperative to constitute the all-embracing political command structure of capital under a "global government" presided over by the worldwide dominant country.

Those who entertained the illusion that postwar "neo-colonialism" had brought into being a stable system in which political/military domination had been replaced by a straightforward economic domination tended to assign too much weight to the continued power of the former colonial imperialist masters after the formal dissolution of their empires, underrating the exclusivistic aspirations of global U.S. hegemonic domination and the causes sustaining them. They imagined that by setting up "Institutes of Development Studies"—for the purpose of "further educating" the post-colonial political and administrative elites of their former dependencies, inducing them into the adoption of the newly promoted theories and policies of "modernization" and "development"—the former colonial rulers could secure a substantive continuity with their old system. What had put an end to such illusions was not only the overwhelmingly greater power of penetration of the American corporations

(forcefully backed by the U.S. government) but, even more so, the collapse of the whole "modernization policy" everywhere, as discussed above.

However, the fact that U.S. hegemonic imperialism proved to be so successful, and still continues to prevail, does not mean that it can be considered stable, let alone permanent. The envisaged "global government" under U.S. management remains a propagandistic wishful thinking, just like the Alliance for Democracy and the Partnership for Peace, projected—at a time of multiplying military collisions and social explosions—as the solid foundation of the newest version of the "New World Order." We have been there before, when—after the implosion of the Soviet system—such vision

> found favor in a U.S. anxious to keep the capitalist dynamo going at the end of the Cold War. Selective engagement with key "emerging market" states provided an alternative foreign policy to the defunct containment strategy. The policy envisaged the U.S. at the hub of a "One World" driving toward shared prosperity, democracy and better living conditions for all. Western corporations would pour technologies into the poorer regions of the world, where labor was abundant, cheap and talented. Global financial markets, no longer under political lock and key, would provide capital. Within a couple of decades, there would arise a huge transnational market for consumers.[94]

The greater part of the projected couple of decades is over, and we are in a much worse condition than ever before even in a capitalistically advanced country like Britain, where—according to the latest statistics—*one in three children* lives below the poverty line, and in the last twenty years their numbers *multiplied threefold*. And no one should have illusions about how the structural crisis of capital affects even the richest country, the United States. For there conditions greatly deteriorated in the last two decades. According to a recent report of the Congressional Budget Office—and no one could accuse that office of a left-wing bias—the richest *one percent* of the population earns as much as the bottom *one hundred million* (i.e., nearly *40 percent*). And significantly, this appalling number has *doubled since 1977,* when the top one percent's income was equivalent to that of "only" *forty-nine million* of the poorest, i.e., less than *20 percent* of the population.[95]

As to the rest of the optimistic projections quoted above, no longer are we treated to the mirage of "a huge transnational market" bringing "prosperity to all," including the people in the East. The Chinese prime minister, Zhu Rongji, is now praised for his "bold attempts to bring reform to the state sector, which now means *unemployment for millions of Chinese workers*."[96] How many more millions of workers—or indeed hundreds of millions of them—must be made unemployed before it can be said that

China has finally qualified "for a place in the free market world"? For the time being the leader writers of the *Economist* can only express their hope, and prognosticate its realization, that the Chinese system will be overthrown from inside,[97] and project the external military solution in other articles, as we have seen above. What is common to the two approaches is the complete absence of any sense of reality. For even if the Chinese system could be overthrown today or tomorrow, that would solve absolutely nothing regarding the total failure of the sanguine expectations once attached to the "emergent market states" and their projected impact "to keep the capitalist dynamo going at the end of the Cold War."

In the meantime the contradictions and antagonisms, linked to ineradicable causes, continue to intensify. Under the rule of capital, which is *structurally* incapable of resolving its contradictions—hence its way of *postponing* the "moment of truth," until the accumulated pressures result in some kind of explosion—there is a tendency to misrepresent historical time, in the direction of both the past and the future, in the interest of eternalizing the present. The tendentious misreading of the past arises from the ideological imperative to misrepresent the present as the necessary structural framework of all possible change. For precisely because the established present must be timelessly projected into the future, the past must also be fictionalized—in the form of a projection backwards—as the domain of the system's eternal presence in another form, so as to remove the actual historical determinations and the time-bound limitations of the present.

As a result of the perverse interests at the roots of capital's relation to time, it can have neither a *long-term perspective* nor a sense of *urgency* even when an explosion is about to take place. Enterprises are oriented toward, and their success is measured in, the fulfillment of projections conceived on the most myopic timescale. This is why the intellectuals who adopt the standpoint of capital like to argue that whatever worked in the past—encapsulated in the idealized method of doing "little by little"—is bound to work in the future. This is a dangerous fallacy. For time is not on our side, given the accumulating pressure of our contradictions. The projection by the *Economist* about the happy alignment of all the "nervous" and "worried" countries with U.S. strategies is, at best, an arbitrary projection of the present into the future, if not a complete misrepresentation of present realities in order to make them suit the wishfully anticipated future. For even the present-day contradictions between the United States and Japan, as well as between Russia and the United States, are much greater than the adopted scheme of things allows for, not to mention their potential unfolding in the future. Nor should one ignore the objective conflicts of interest between India and the United States in order to transfigure them into perfect harmony on account of the postulated "nervousness" about China.

Moreover, even the apparently prevalent harmony of the United States with the European Union in the framework of NATO should not be taken for granted to persist in the future, given the clear signs of "inter-imperialist" conflicts both within the EU and between the EU and the United States.[98] At times even the *Economist* gives away its concern that not everything is going as it should in the conflict-ridden power relations of the West, insisting though that no one should even dream about challenging U.S. domination. As an editorial article of the journal puts it:

> Even the motives for a common foreign policy vary. Some Europeans want it as an expression of Europe's common political will; others as a rival to, and restraint upon, the United States. If it turned into nothing more than a form of anti-Americanism, it would be a disaster. For the foreseeable future, NATO, preferably in synch with the UN, will be the linchpin of Western security. America must still take the lead in dealing with most of the world's danger zones. But in near-at-hand places like the Balkans, America will happily defer to Europe. And even in areas like the Middle East or Russia, Europe ought to be able to play a complementary role to America. Europe can and should exercise a greater influence in the world, but it will not be a superpower for many years yet.[99]

The meaningless phrase "Europe can and should exercise a greater influence in the world" (like what? and where?) is thrown in as an empty "consolation prize" so as to legitimate in the eyes of the feeble-minded the absolute supremacy of the United States, propagandized by the *Economist.* In truth, the question is not at all how long will it take for Europe to become a "superpower" matching the military might of the United States. Rather, it is in what form and with what intensity will the simmering inter-imperialist antagonisms erupt into the open in the by no means distant future.

As a matter of fact, the U.S. administration is already quite concerned about the prospects of European developments:

> Strobe Talbott, deputy Secretary of State, said the last thing Washington wanted to see was a European defense identity "which begins within NATO, but grows out of NATO, and then away from NATO." The risk, he told a seminar at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is of an EU defense structure that "first duplicates the alliance and then competes with the alliance." Mr. Talbott's words . . . also touch America's basic ambivalence about greater European unity: that it is fine *so long as it does not threaten U.S. global preeminence.*[100]

Thus the American State Department misses no opportunity to hammer home the plain truth about its determination to keep the rest of the world subservient to the demands of its "*global preeminence.*" Naturally, the most subservient of all Western governments, the British, hastened to oblige and voice its unqualified reassurance at the same seminar of the Royal Institute of International Affairs: "Trying to allay U.S. anxieties, Lord Robertson, the outgoing Secretary of State for Defense who takes over at NATO from Mr. Solana next week, declared that the Atlantic alliance remains the cornerstone of British defense policy."[101] That may be so for as long as the Trojan horse role assigned by the United States to the British government in Europe remains unquestioned. However, such reassurances are no more than whistling in the dark in regard to the existing objective contradictions of interest among the Western powers, which are bound to intensify in the future, no matter how forcefully the U.S. State Department reminds the EU of who is really entitled to call the tune even when refusing to pay for it.

7. The Challenge of Sustainable Development and the Culture of Substantive Equality

To the memory of Daniel Singer with whom we often conversed about the untenability of our order of structural inequality.

7.1 Farewell to "Liberty—Fraternity—Equality"

TWO, CLOSELY CONNECTED, PROPOSITIONS are at the center of this chapter.[102] The first is that if development in the future is not *sustainable* development, there will be no significant development at all, no matter how badly needed; only frustrated attempts to try to square the circle, as in the last few decades, marked by ever more elusive "modernizing" theories and practices, condescendingly prescribed to the so-called Third World by the spokesmen of former colonial powers. And the corollary second proposition is that the condition inseparable from the pursuit of sustainable development is the progressive realization of *substantive equality*. It must be also stressed in this context that the obstacles to be overcome could hardly be greater. For up to our own days the culture of *substantive inequality* remains dominant, despite the usually halfhearted efforts to counter the damaging impact of social inequality by instituting in the political sphere some mechanism of strictly formal equality.

We may well ask the question: What happened in the course of subsequent historical development to the noble ideas of *Liberty—Fraternity—Equality* proclaimed at the time of the French Revolution and genuinely believed by many long afterward? Why was *Fraternity and Equality* discarded altogether, often with undisguised contempt, and *Liberty* reduced to the fragile skeleton of "the democratic right to vote," exercised by a skeptically diminishing number of people in the countries that like to

describe themselves as "the model of democracy"?[103] And that is far from the sum total of the bad news. For, as twentieth-century history amply demonstrates, even the meager measures of formal equality are often considered an unaffordable luxury, and become unceremoniously nullified by corrupt and authoritarian political practices, or indeed by openly pursued dictatorial interventions.

After more than a whole century of promises for eliminating—or at least greatly reducing—inequality, through "progressive taxation" and other state legislative measures, and thereby securing the conditions of socially viable development all over the world, reality turned out to be characterized by ever-growing inequality not only between the "developed North" and the "underdeveloped South," but even within the capitalistically most advanced countries. As mentioned before, a recent report of the U.S. Congress (which could not be accused of left-wing bias) admitted that the income of the top *one percent* of the American population now exceeds the bottom *40 percent;*[104] a figure that in the last two decades *doubled* from "only" 20 percent, scandalous as it was even at that lower figure. These regressive developments went hand in hand with first stipulating a false opposition between "equality of outcome" and "equality of opportunity," and then abandoning even the lip service once paid to the (never realized) idea of "equality of opportunity." Not that this kind of end-result could be considered surprising. For once the socially challenging "outcome" is arbitrarily eliminated from the picture and opposed by "opportunity," the latter becomes devoid of all content and, in the name of the totally vacuous term of objectless (and worse: *outcome-denying*) "equality," it is turned into the ideological justification of the effective practical negation of all real opportunity to those who need it.

Once upon a time the progressive thinkers of the rising bourgeoisie optimistically predicted, as indeed a great figure of the Scottish historical school of the Enlightenment, Henry Home, did, that the domination of one social being by another will be remembered in the future as a bad dream, because "reason, resuming her sovereign authority, will banish persecution altogether, and within the next century it will be thought strange that persecution should have prevailed among social beings. It will perhaps be even doubted, whether it ever was seriously put into practice."[105] Ironically, in the light of the way things actually turned out, what now seems to be rather hard to believe is that the intellectual representatives of the bourgeoisie in the ascendant could once reason in such terms. A giant of eighteenth-century French Enlightenment, Denis Diderot, did not hesitate to assert with great social radicalism that *"if the day-worker is miserable the nation is miserable."*[106] Equally Rousseau, with utmost radicalism and biting sarcasm, described the prevailing order of social domination and subordination in this way:

> The terms of the social compact between these two estates of man may be summed up in a few words: "You have need of me, because I am rich and you are poor. We will therefore come to an agreement. I will permit you to have the honour of serving me, on condition that you bestow on me the little you have left, in return for the pains I shall take to command you."[107]

In the same spirit, the great Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico insisted that the culmination of historical development is "the age of men in which all men recognized themselves as *equal in human nature.*"[108] And a long time earlier Thomas Münzer, the Anabaptist leader of the German peasant revolution, pinpointed in his pamphlet against Luther the root cause of the advancing social evil in quite tangible terms, diagnosing it as the cult of universal saleability and alienation, concluding his discourse by saying how intolerable it was that "every creature should be *transformed into property*—the fishes in the water, the birds of the air, the plants of the earth."[109] This was a far-sighted identification of what was to unfold with all-engulfing power in the course of the next three centuries. As befits the paradoxical achievements of premature utopian anticipations, it offered from the vantage point of the far less settled structures of early capitalistic developments a much clearer vision of the dangers to come than what became visible to the participants directly involved in the vicissitudes of the more advanced phases. For once the social trend of universal saleability triumphs, in tune with the inner requirements of capital's social formation, what still appears to Münzer as the gross violation of the natural order (and, as we know, what in the longer run endangers the very existence of humankind), to the thinkers who unreservedly identify themselves with the historically created (and in principle likewise removable) constraints of capital's fully developed social order seem to be self-evidently natural, unalterable and acceptable. Thus many things become opaque and obfuscated by the shift in the historical vantage point. Even the crucial term of "liberty" suffers a reduction to its alienated core, hailed as the conquest of "the power to freely sell oneself" through the presumed "contract between equals," in opposition to the political restrictions of the feudal order but ignoring, and even idealizing, the grave material and social constraints of the new one. Accordingly the original meaning of both "liberty" and "equality" is changed into abstract and circularly self-sustaining determinations,[110] making thereby the idea of "fraternity"—the third member of the once solemnly proclaimed noble aspirations—utterly redundant as a matter of course.

7.2 The Failure of Modernization and Development

IT IS THIS KIND OF SPIRIT that must be now confronted, unless we are willing to resign ourselves to the acceptance of the status quo and with it the prospect of continuing social paralysis and ultimate human self-destruction. For those who are the beneficiaries of the now prevailing system of crying inequality between the "developed" and the "underdeveloped" parts of the world do not hesitate to impose, with utmost cynicism, the impact of their self-serving irresponsibility—as they have done quite recently in the arbitrary dimissal of the Kyoto Protocols and other environmental imperatives—by insisting that the countries of the South should remain stuck at their present level of development, otherwise they would grab to themselves "iniquitously preferential" treatment. They have the nerve to speak in the name of equality! At the same time they also refuse to see that the North-South divide is a major structural defect of the whole system, affecting every single country, including their own, even if for the time being in a less extreme form than the so-called Third World. Nevertheless, the tendency in question is far from reassuring even for the capitalistically most advanced countries. As an illustration we may add here to the earlier quoted U.S. figure of the income of one percent outstripping that of 40 percent the alarming rise in child powerty in Britain: in the last two decades, according to the most recent statistics, the number of children living below the poverty line has multiplied *threefold* in the United Kingdom, and continues to increase every year.

The difficulty for us is that viewing these matters in a *short-term* perspective, as the dominant cultural and political organs necessarily portray them, carries with it the temptation to follow "the line of least resistance," leading to no significant change. The argument associated with this way of assessing the issues at stake is that "the problems worked themselves out in the past; they are bound to do so also in the future." Nothing could be more fallacious than this line of reasoning, even if it is most convenient to the beneficiaries of the status quo who cannot face up to the explosive contradictions of our predicament in the longer run. Yet, as concerned scientists of the ecological movement keep reminding us: the "longer run" is by no means that long by now, since the clouds of an environmental catastrophe are visibly getting darker on our horizon. Shutting our eyes offers no solutions. Nor should we allow ourselves to be deceived by the illusion that the danger of devastating military collisions belongs irretrievably to the past, thanks to the good offices of the "New World Order." The perils in this respect are as great as ever, if not greater, in that not even a single one of the underlying contradictions and antagonisms has been resolved through the implosion of the Soviet system. The recently announced abandonment of even the fragile and limited arms agreements of the past, and the adventurist pursuit of the nightmare

project of "the son of Star Wars," with the lamest possible justification of installing such weaponry "against rogue states," represent a stark reminder in this respect.

For a very long time we were expected to believe that all our problems will be happily solved through socially neutral "development" and "modernization." Technology was supposed to overcome by itself all conceivable obstacles and difficulties. This was at best an illusion imposed on all those who, for want of any outlet for their own active role in decision-making, went on hoping that major improvements in their conditions of existence would be realized in the promised way. They had to find out by bitter experience that the technological panacea was a self-serving evasion of the contradictions by those who held the levers of social control. The "green revolution" in agriculture was supposed to resolve once and for all the world problem of famine and malnutrition. Instead, it created monster-corporations like Monsanto, entrenching their power all over the world in such a way that major grassroots action is required in order to eradicate it. Yet the ideology of strictly technological remedies continues to be propagandized to the present despite all the failures. Recently some heads of governments, including the British, started to preach sermons about the coming *green industrial revolution,* whatever that might mean. What is clear, nevertheless, is that this newfangled technological panacea is intended, again, as a way to run away from the ineradicable social and political dimension of the ever-intensifying environmental dangers.

Thus it is no exaggeraion to say that in our time the interests of those who cannot even imagine an alternative to the short-term perspective of the given order, and to the fanciful projection of strictly technological correctives compatible with it, directly collide with the interest of human survival itself. In the past the magic term for judging the health of our social system was *growth,* and still today it remains the framework in which solutions must be envisaged. What is evaded by the unqualifed praise of growth is precisely the questions of *what kind of growth* and *to what end*? Especially since the reality of unqualified growth under our conditions of social metabolic reproduction happens to be *extreme wastefulness* and heaping up problems for future generations to face, as they must one day deal, for instance, with the consequences of nuclear power—peaceful and military alike.

The cousin of "growth," the concept of "development," must be also subjected to the same kind of critical scrutiny. Once upon a time it was embraced without hesitation by virtually everybody, and major institutional resources were mobilized in the service of spreading the gospel of U.S.-type "modernization and development" in the so-called underdeveloped world. It took some time before it could be realized that there was something fatefully defective about the recommended model. For if the U.S. model—whereby *4 percent* of the world population wastes *25 percent* of world

energy and strategic material resources, and pollutes the world by the same *25 percent*—is followed everywhere else, we would all be suffocated in no time. This is why for us it became necessary to qualify all future development as *sustainable development,* in order to fill the concept with actually feasible and socially desirable content.

7.3 Structural Domination and the Culture of Substantive Inequality

THE GREAT CHALLENGE OF sustainable development we now have to face cannot be properly addressed without removing the paralyzing constraints of the *adversarial* character of our social reproduction process. This is why the question of *substantive equality* cannot be avoided in our time, in contrast to the past. For *sustainability* means being really *in control* of the vital social, economic and cultural processes through which human beings not merely survive but can also find fulfillment, in accordance with the designs they set themselves, instead of being at the mercy of unpredictable natural forces and quasi-natural socioeconomic determinations. Our existing social order is built on the structural antagonism between capital and labor, and therefore it requires the exercise of *external control* over all recalcitrant forces. *Adversariality* is the necessary concomitant of such a system, no matter how much waste of human and economic resources must be paid for its maintenance.

Yet the imperative for eliminating waste has clearly surfaced on our horizon, as a major requirement of *sustainable* development. For "economy" in the longer run must go hand in hand with rational and humanly meaningful *economizing,* as befits the core of its concept. But the meaningfully economizing way of regulating our social metabolic reproduction process, on the basis of *internal/self-directed,* as opposed to the now prevailing *external/top-down* control, is radically incompatible with *structural inequality and adversariality.* The Soviet-type system had its own form of adversariality that ultimately resulted in its implosion. But no one should nourish the illusion that our type of capital system is immune to such contradictions, just because for the time being it can manage wastefulness and inequality in a more effective way.

In our societies the structurally entrenched and safeguarded determinations of material inequality are greatly reinforced by the dominant *culture of inequality,* mentioned earlier, through which the individuals *internalize* their "station in society," more or less consensually resigning themselves to their predicament of subordination to those who make the decisions over their life activity. This culture was constituted parallel to the formation of capital's new structures of inequality, on the iniquitous foundations inherited from the past. There was a *reciprocal interaction* between the material reproductive structures and the cultural dimension, creating a vicious circle

that trapped the overwhelming majority of individuals in their strictly restrained domain of action. If we now envisage a qualitative change for the future, as we must, the vital role of cultural processes cannot be overstated. For there can be no breakout from the now dominant vicious circle unless we succeed in operating the same kind of interaction—but this time in a positive emancipatory direction—that characterized social developent in the past. From the present mode of social reproduction process, in the long run quite untenable, to one no longer burdened with the destructive tendencies of the adversarial confrontations of our time, no instant change can be envisaged. Success will require the constitution of a *culture of substantive equality,* with the active involvement of all, and the *awareness* of one's own share of *responsibility* implicit in the operation of such—non-adversarial—mode of decision-making.

Understandably, in the creation of the long-established culture of substantive inequality even the greatest and most enlightened thinkers of the bourgeoisie in the ascendant, as children of their time and station, were implicated. Let me illustrate this point with Goethe's lifelong struggle with the meaning of the Faust legend, intended to represent humanity's quest for realizing its destiny. As we know, according to the pact of the restless Faust with the devil, he is bound to lose his wager (and his soul) the moment he finds fulfillment and satisfaction in life. And this is how the fateful moment is greeted by Faust:

> Such busy, teeming throngs I long to see,
> Standing on freedom's soil, a people free.
> Then to the moment could I say:
> Linger you now, you are so fair!
> Now records of my earthly day
> No flight of aeons can impair—
> Foreknowledge comes, and fills me
> with such bliss,
> I take my joy, my highest moment this.

However, with supreme irony Goethe shows that Faust's great excitement is misplaced. For what he greets (when blinded by Sorge) as the great work for conquering land from the swamps, in fulfillment of his own plan, is in reality the noise made by the lemurs digging his grave. And only celestial intervention can, in the end, save Faust, rescuing his soul from the clutches of the devil. The greatness of Goethe is evident in the way he also indicates why Faust's quest must end in irony and insoluble ambiguity, even if Goethe cannot distance himself from the worldview of his hero, trapped by the conception of "enlightened inequality." This is the summation of the Faustian vision:

Only *the master's word* gives action weight,
And what I framed in thought I will fulfill.
Ho, you my people, quickly come from rest:
Let the world see the fruit of bold behest.
Man all the tools, spade, shovel, as is due,
The work marked out must straight be
carried through.
Quick diligence, firm discipline,
With these the noblest heights we win.
To end the greatest work designed,
A thousand hands need but one mind.

Clearly, the destination of the overwhelming majority of humankind to the role of "hands," asked to "man all the tools," in the service of "one mind," and obeying "the master's words" with "quick diligence and discipline," is quite untenable in the longer run, no matter how closely it resembles the now dominant actual state of affairs. How could we consider the human beings confined to such a role to be *"standing on freedom's soil, a people free"*? The instructions given by Faust to the *Overseer* as to the way to control the workers, faithfully realistic though for our predicament today they are, reflect the same, untenable, spirit:

Use every means, and strive
To get more workers, shift on shift enroll,
With comforts spur them on, and good control.
Pay them, cajole them, use a press-gang drive,
A fresh report you'll bring me daily, showing
How my projected locks and dykes are growing.

And what meaning can we give to Faust's "great plan on behalf of humanity" when capital's social order is radically incompatible with the *comprehensive planning* without which the very survival of humanity cannot be secured? As Goethe's Mephistopheles describes the prospects ahead of us with brutal realism:

What matters our creative endless toil,
When, at a snatch, oblivion ends the coil?

"A thousand hands" in the service of "one mind" obviously cannot offer us any solution. Nor can the mystical Chorus of Angels in the last scene of Goethe's

Faust counter the Mephistophelian threat of *oblivion* looming at the end of the road.[111]

In a somewhat more conflict-torn age Balzac, in one of his great novellas, *Melmoth Reconciled*, takes up the Faust theme, rescuing in a very different way Melmoth/Faust—who, thanks to his pact with the devil, enjoys unlimited wealth throughout his life. There is no need for divine intervention in his case. On the contrary, the solution is offered with extreme irony and sarcasm. For Melmoth cleverly saves his own soul—when he feels death approaching and wants to get out of his pact with the devil—by making a deal with another man, Castanier, in trouble for embezzlement, exchanging his imperiled soul with the latter, who doesn't hesitate to enter the deal that confers upon him unlimited wealth. Castanier's words, when he in turn hits on the idea of how he is to get out of ultimate trouble, by obtaining still another soul in exchange for his own devil-plighted soul, sum up in a striking way Balzac's sarcasm which brings up to date Thomas Münzer's prophetic diagnosis of all-encroaching alienation. Castanier goes to the Stock Exchange, absolutely convinced he will succeed in finding someone whose soul he can obtain in exchange for his own, by saying that on the Stock Exchange *"even the Holy Spirit has its quotation"* (*Il Banco di Santo Spirito* of the Vatican) in the list of the great banks.[112]

However, it is enough to follow even for a few days the threatening disturbances on our stock exchanges to realize that Melmoth's solution is not more realistic today than Goethe's celestial intervention. Our historical challenge for securing the conditions of sustainable development must be solved in a very different way.

Extricating ourselves from the culture of substantive inequality and progressively replacing it with a viable alternative is the road we need to follow.

8. Another World Is Possible and Necessary

8.1 The Myth of Ideological Neutrality and the Imposition of the Single-Ideology State

IN THE FIRST EDITION of *The Power of Ideology*—a book completed in August 1988—I quoted from an important and most revealing lecture given in 1930 by John Maynard Keynes.[113] In those days the leading ideologists of the given social order, highly confident of their secure position in determining what was to be legitimate (or ruled out of order) in theoretical and political discussions, as if it was their birthright, had no qualms about openly declaring their ideological interests. This was in sharp contrast to hiding behind the pretenses of a presumed absolute objectivity—which became fashionable somewhat later—and at the same time dismissing only their opponents as unforgivably ideological. In fact, the quoted 1930 lecture by Keynes: "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren," was subsequently included in an unashamedly ideological volume titled *Essays in Persuasion*.

In another lecture included in that volume, written in the same spirit of boundless self-confidence, with the title "Am I a Liberal?" and delivered at an earlier date, in 1926, Keynes openly admitted that "when it comes to the *class struggle* as such … the *class war* will find me on the side of the *educated bourgeoisie*,"[114] instead of pretending, as it is customary today in respectable intellectual and political circles, that there is no such thing as the class struggle. The latter is supposed to be a pure invention of a certain Karl Marx, although the forceful diagnosis of the seminal role played by the class struggle in historical development was first elaborated by some major French historians of the "educated bourgeoisie," and their highly original theoretical contribution was duly acknowledged by Marx himself.

In his "Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren" Keynes decreed with candid confidence and optimism that "humanity's economic problem" (as he called it) will be fully solved *within one hundred years*. According to this projection, the "economic problem"—in his theorization completely divorced from all of its fundamental social dimensions—will be so fully and irreversibly solved that our dilemma will be how to occupy ourselves at all in the total absence of—again in his own words, "foul"[115]—economic pressures that now motivate us. As a result, in that irresistibly advancing world of unlimited leisure "We shall honor those who can teach us how to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well, the delightful people who are capable of taking direct enjoyment in things, the lilies of the field who toil not, neither do they spin."[116]

The point that must be underlined here is that another *sixteen years* have gone by since I first quoted these words, and we are now only twenty-six years away from the magic moment of quasi-biblical fulfillment postulated by Keynes. But what happened in these seventy-four years: nearly *three-quarters* of the way to the promised land? Did we get any nearer to the conditions so confidenly anticipated by the author of *Essays in Persuasion*?

The sobering answer is: not in the slightest. Quite the contrary, despite all advances in the productive powers of our society—which must be under our present conditions of existence also ubiquitously diffused and irresponsibly used destructive powers—the crying inequalities we have to confront with sustained determination, in order to get even one inch nearer to the desired objectives, have become immeasurably greater and structurally even more entrenched than before. At the same time the dangers that must be overcome to have any future at all, let alone an idealized future, are now that much more aggravated than what Keynes could even dream about.

At the rate of progress we have made in the last seventy-four years for resolving the structurally entrenched inequalities of our society, moving rather more backwards than forwards, we would need not twenty-six years to reach the goal envisaged by Keynes but an infinity of time. The trouble is, though, that humanity has no infinity of time at its disposal when in reality it has to face the danger of potential self-annihilation, due to the apparent uncontrollability of its mode of social metabolic reproduction under the rule of capital.

Keynes had put his faith, in support of his boundless "persuasive" optimism, in a rather naive mechanistic vision that projected the automatic power of "compound interest" for achieving the desired accumulation of capital. In his view it was the irresistible destiny of this unlimited accumulation of capital—emanating not from the power of humanly degrading exploitative *production* but from the somewhat mysterious and totally beneficial *financial* domain of compound interest (a neutral fiction, akin to the "globalizing" fantasies of our time: in both cases tendentiously abstracted

from the role of the far from neutral guarantor and enforcer: the capitalist state)—that in its turn was supposed to bring with it the projected happy ending.

His own, openly confessed "educated bourgeois" ideological horizon could not allow Keynes to see or admit that the structurally inalterable imperative of restless *capital accumulation,* fatefully inimical even in its longest term perspective to any idea of restful human gratification and to a correspondingly different conception of time, was totally incompatible with moving from the present order of society—where in his own words "foul is useful and fair is not"—and "out of the tunnel of economic necessity into the daylight"[117] of a qualitatively different and humanly rewarding social order. Thus trapped by the dictates of his "educated bourgeois" social interests, Keynes ideologically embellished and propagandized in his *Essays in Persuasion* precisely the structurally safeguarded *cause* of humankind's perilous condition as the *ideal remedy* to all of the existing troubles and contradictions. An evident fallacy of the worst kind.

In reality nothing could sustain such a vision in the lifetime of Keynes, nor indeed ever since those heady days. The well-deserved collapse of the WTO's meeting in Cancun in September 2003, highlighting the miserable condition of the overwhelming majority of humankind, thanks to the defiant intervention of the "wretched of the earth," puts forcefully into relief how far we are even today from taking the first timid steps in the direction of facing up to the growing dangers and ever-accumulating contradictions of our "foul" predicament, let alone from finding for them the postulated Keynesian ideal solutions.

This is where we find ourselves today, when we can no longer afford to confound the fundamental *causes* of human grievances with their advocated—utterly fictionalized and at the same time highly partisan—illusory *remedy,* whether the latter is offered with open and honest self-assurance, as done by John Maynard Keynes in his *Essays in Persuasion,* or as the deceptive ideological camouflage frequently practiced in our days by the pseudo-objective and "neutral" defenders of the existing order. For all pretenses to ideological neutrality can only aggravate our problems when the necessity of ideology is inescapable, as indeed it happens to be today and must stay so in the foreseeable future as well. Inescapable, to be sure, for as long as it remains necessary to "fight out the conflicts" that continue to arise from the irreconcilable interests of the alternative hegemonic forces that face one another in our existing social order of structural domination and subordination.

Thus the need for a forceful critical examination of the ruses of the ruling ideology—often enveloped in the seemingly impenetrable products of institutionally well-oiled fog generators—has never been greater than in our own days. The stakes are becoming higher than ever before, because the former instruments for politically

redressing some of our grievances, however limited they were in the past, are now systematically undermined and even destroyed by the juggernaut of the state, in the interest of perpetuating the rule of capital with the help of crudely enforced ideological and political conformity. The signs of this trend toward securing and safeguarding the uniformity required by capital's need to impose the *single-ideology state* are quite dangerous. The desired uniformity must be imposed with whatever means, even with the potentially—which, in justifying the new imperialist wars is no longer just potentially—most violent ones.

The impact of this dangerous trend in our time also extends into areas formerly celebrated in the name of the model presumed compulsory for the entire world: the institutional framework of Western democracy and liberty. But what was once a genuine liberal article of faith, even if a rather tenuous one, has become nothing more than a cynical façade for aggressive adventures. To quote John Pilger: "The undermining of the Bill of Rights in the United States and the further dismantling of trial by jury in Britain and a plethora of related civil liberties are part of the reduction of democracy to electoral ritual: that is, competition between indistinguishable parties for the management of a *single-ideology state.*"[118] Ideological mystification and *Gleichschaltung*—which means compression into a prescribed mold of uniformity—is an essential part of this oppressive process. It is, therefore, all the more important to fight the ongoing efforts to impose everywhere the single-ideology state, no matter how "reasonable" and universally commendable it is supposed to be.

8.2 The Emergence of Neoliberal Consensus

WE HAVE WITNESSED SOME intensely dramatic developments in the last sixteen years, since the completion of *The Power of Ideology*. But to make them really intelligible they must be characterized with some precision, pinpointing their origins in time to the extent to which this is feasible under the present circumstances.

Undoubtedly the implosion of the Soviet system in 1991 is an important signpost in this respect. However, this development itself requires further explanation, instead of being used as some kind of "original cause" of the painfully obvious political retreat of the left, both in the East and in the West. This kind of explanation, characterized by turning the actual causal relations upside down, is frequently offered in ideological discussions nowadays, representing a far from legitimate attempt to justify the complete turnaround of those who once not only claimed to be socialists—or "actually existing socialists"—but even presumed for themselves the mandate of being the unquestionable judges for the credentials of others on the left.

The facts of this rather uncomfortable matter are quite well known, but must be spirited out of existence in order to create the semblance of a presumed "reasonable" mainstream ideological consensus as the happy result. Locating the time of the big retreat in the years that immediately followed the Soviet implosion—a dating favored by many former left-wing intellectuals as the justification for embarking on their "road to Damascus"—tends both to misrepresent the personal conversions and, more important, minimizes the institutional collapses. For not only the Western communist parties turned themselves into tame social democratic–type parties of the established order, justifying their dramatic change of course in the name of the Soviet collapse. The old social democratic parties of the major West-European countries transformed themselves into center-right conservative parties, making themselves ultimately indistinguishable from the political instruments of the "Thatcherite revolution."

The personal conversions were, of course, an integral part—but only a part—of this process of significantly shifting the political spectrum toward the right. This is why it is in no way surprising to see the British Labour Party as a whole being metamorphosed into the party of "New Labour," so as to be able to retain after its electoral victory all of Margaret Thatcher's anti-labor laws, despite all earlier manifesto commitments to the contrary, and indeed to make them even more authoritarian in some respects.

Such weighty historical developments cannot be explained simply by "personal conversions." Rather, the sometimes quite surprising individual conversions themselves become intelligible only when they are set against the background of the general trend of historical developments. After all it should not be forgotten that the first drastic measures of neoliberal monetarism in Britain were imposed by none other than "Old Labour's" economic supremo, Denis Healey, under the once-upon-a-time left-wing Harold Wilson's premiership. This happened well before the British Conservative Party could fully embrace the forceful right-wing leadership of Margaret Thatcher. Tellingly, her electoral victory came after Harold Wilson's successor as Labour prime minister, James Callaghan, addressed a working-class audience with his brutally outspoken words: "The party is over." He was indicating thereby the Labour government's determination to follow a new course of progressively liquidating the postwar gains of the British working class. Thus the emergence of the unholy neoliberal consensus of the parliamentary forces preceded the Conservative Party's electoral victory. The subsequent explicit abandonment of the central tenet of the Labour Party's constitution—its *clause four*, which programmatically committed the British labor movement to securing the common ownership of the means of production—was only the logical conclusion of a retrograde process that had started much earlier.

To understand the magnitude of these changes in the last three decades all over Europe (and by no means only there), we have to turn our attention to the underlying forces and contradictions. For they do not belong to a safely receding past. On the contrary, they continue to hem in our own margin of action even today. Worse than that, in our own days they bring to the fore ever more dangerous attempts—including the by now almost routine use of the most brutal military machinery on a large scale, wedded to false pretenses for wars and their cynical ideological justifications—representing a most irrational design to bring the aggravating contradictions of our established socioeconomic and political order under authoritarian control. In other words, we are talking about the characteristics of a new *historical epoch*, and not about the more or less ephemeral events of a limited political conjuncture. Consequently, to envisage overcoming the contradictions and the dangers we are facing—in all their gravity, which ultimately foreshadows the potential self-destruction of humankind instead of its happy landing in the Keynesian Neverland of an eternal leisurely paradise—it is necessary to identify their defining characteristics as belonging to a significantly different *epoch*, in contrast to the earlier phases of capitalistic developments. By the same token, the potential remedies cannot be confined to some convenient detail, in the spirit of what seems to have worked in the past, as frequently advocated. They also must point in the direction of an alternative and sustainable set of epochal determinations; that is, toward a qualitatively different social order from which the now dominant destructive trends of cancerous growth and capital accumulation are permanently removed. It is necessary to make this quite clear, even if accusations of "utopianism" follow. We should not be afraid of defending what Daniel Singer calls "Realistic Utopia,"[119] for "if any attempt to change society, and not just mend it, is branded angrily and contemptuously as utopian, then, turning the insult into a badge of honour, we must proudly proclaim that we are all utopians."[120]

8.3 Capital's Structural Crisis and the Implosion of the Soviet System

THE FUNDAMENTAL DEFINING characteristic of our present epoch, in contrast to the earlier phases of capitalistic developments, is that we live under the perilous conditions of the *structural crisis of the capital system as a whole*. In other words, the systemic crisis we suffer is particularly grave. It is in no way measurable by the yardstick of past forms of crisis. For the meaning of the capital system as such (that is: as extending to its structural limits) embraces not only its historically known forms, as identifiable in the past, from its beginnings to the twentieth century, but also its feasible varieties in the future, if any.

Thus the epoch of the capital system's *structural crisis*, in contradistinction to the formerly experienced and more or less enduringly superseded *conjunctural crises of capitalism,* carries with it the most radical implications for our present and future. Accordingly, in view of the fact that nothing less than the continued viability of the now dominant but increasingly destructive *systemic forces* happens to be at stake in our times, only a truly *epochal change* can resolve the deepening structural crisis of our existing mode of social metabolic reproduction. This is so because the capital system as such is not simply the conglomeration of a set of material entities, arranged and, whenever conditions require, successfully rearranged in a suitable order by the combined resources of "instrumental rationality" and "Protestant work ethic," as frequently misconceived. Rather, it is an organic system of social metabolic reproduction, with its own logic and objective set of imperatives, subsuming under itself—for better or worse, according to the changing historical circumstances—all areas of human activity, from the most basic economic processes to the most mediated and sophisticated intellectual and cultural domains.

The eruption of the capital system's structural crisis can be approximately located toward the end of the 1960s or the beginning of the 1970s. In fact the 1968 upheavals in France and in many other countries, including the United States, after the long period of postwar expansion and Keynesian accommodation all over the capitalist world, may be used as a memorable signpost. The 1968 upheavals manifested not only in the form of some major economic conflicts but also as quite significant political confrontations, mobilizing even some formerly unsuspected social forces on the side of a fierce opposition to the established order. But perhaps most important of all, around 1970 we were subjected to a dangerous development in the world of labor that somewhat later had to be characterized even by the apologists of the established order as "structural unemployment." Ever since those days, by now going back to no less than three and a half decades, this problem has been further aggravated, instead of being resolved in line with repeated promises and expectations. It escalated to perilous proportions even in the capitalistically most developed countries, underlining thereby the stubborn unremediability of this feature of the system's structural crisis. I wrote in 1970, right at the beginning of the unfolding trend of chronic unemployment:

> The problem is no longer the plight of unskilled laborers but also that of large numbers of *highly skilled* workers who are now chasing, in addition to the earlier pool of unemployed, the depressingly few available jobs. Also, the trend of "rationalizing" amputation is no longer confined to the "peripheral branches of ageing industry" but embraces some of the *most developed* and modernized sectors of production—from shipbuilding and aviation to electronics, and

> from engineering to space technology. Thus we are no longer concerned with the "normal", and "willingly accepted," by-products of "growth and development" but with their driving to a halt; nor indeed with the peripheral problems of "pockets of underdevelopment" but with a fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production as a whole which turns even the latest achievements of "development," "rationalization" and "modernization" into paralyzing burdens of chronic underdevelopment. And, most important of all, the human agency which finds itself at the receiving end is no longer the socially powerless multitude of "underprivileged" people but *all* categories of skilled and unskilled labor: i.e., objectively, the *total labor force* of society.[121]

It is most ironical that the one-sidedly propagandized "globalization" process assumed the devastating form of chronic unemployment everywhere, including the capitalistically most developed and privileged North. But that is, of course, the last thing the uncritical advocates of globalization would wish to put into relief. What makes this matter particularly grave is that chronic unemployment represents an *absolute*—in the sense of untranscendable—limit of the capital system as such in all of its known and feasible varieties. This is why only a truly epochal change, instituting a radically different social order, can overcome the inhumanities of ever more globalized unemployment: a problem of which no amount of "casualization"—a polite word for brutal *precarization*—can even scratch the surface.

This is not the place for discussing the other principal characteristics (and in the just mentioned sense absolute limits) of the capital system. Nor is there a pressing need for it in the present context.[122] What is directly relevant here is that the system's structural crisis—with which we had to live by now for three and a half decades, without any sign of it being lifted from our horizon—is inseparable from the activation of capital's untranscendable limits, with the potentially most destructive consequences for the future.

The implosion of the Soviet system can be made intelligible only as an integral part of this systemic crisis. For the attempted Soviet solution came into being as a way of overcoming in its own setting a major capitalist crisis by instituting a *post-capitalist* mode of production and exchange through the abolition of the private ownership of the means of production. However, the Soviet solution could not eradicate capital from the post-capitalist system of social metabolic reproduction. Thus it could remain operational only until the necessity to go *beyond the capital system as such*—and not simply to negate a specific form of rather backward capitalism—appeared as a fundamental challenge on the global order of the day. This is why in the end the Soviet post-capitalist experiment had to hit the buffers.

The Power of Ideology assessed these processes in terms of the capital system's overall structural crisis. It argued about the Gorbachevian efforts that

> it is by no means accidental that these problems have surfaced at the present juncture of history. For not only the capitalist system and the Third World but the [Soviet-type] "Second World," too, is confronted today by a dual crisis: the *crisis of development* and the *crisis of authority*. . . . The failures of the past [in the Soviet system] could not be attributed to the repression of the mechanism of individual material incentives but, rather, to the refusal to face up to the difficult practical question of their status and role in the necessary socialist restructuring of society. They were left in limbo; for addressing this issue would only be possible if simultaneously the inherited *hierarchical/structural division of labor*—with all its subsequent modifications—could be forcefully tackled. It was much easier to leave the inherited structures—and the associated motivational mechanism of *differential* material incentives meant to legitimate the given hierarchical structure—in their place.[123]

Post-capitalist solutions, under all circumstances, can only be strictly *temporary*. For a variety of reasons they must remain vulnerable in their innermost determinations, no matter how stable they might appear under determinate historical conditions. In the course of their development they either move in the direction of completely eradicating capital from their social metabolism of reproduction or become increasingly exposed to the danger of capitalist restoration. "Expropriating the expropriators"—and in that sense altering capital's earlier position at the level of property relations—is very far from being enough. This is because capital is essentially a mode of overall societal control and not merely a *legally codified entitlement* to it.[124] Take away this entitlement from the individual capitalists, called by Marx "the personifications of capital" (who are strictly mandated to carry out capital's objective imperatives, otherwise they are unceremoniously ejected from the societal reproduction process as failed capitalists), and the substantive issues of effective control remain unsolved. Altering the legal entitlement leaves the question of capital's real mode of existence—as the *materially* and not simply *juridically* controlling force of the social metabolism—fundamentally unresolved.

To imagine that the state—any kind of state—can successfully take upon itself the direct control of all of the particular reproductive functions of society is a great illusion. In this sense "the failure of post-capitalist societies in the sphere of production must be attributed to a very large extent to their attempt to assign such metabolic controlling functions to a centralized political state, when in reality the *state as such* is not

suitable to the realization of the task that involves, one way or another, the everyday life-activity of each individual."[125] To succeed in such a completely misconceived task the state would need an *infinity of resources,* which, obviously, no state can conceivably have. In order to directly control the labor of everyone, the state would have to be able to stand all the time behind the back of every single individual—which would be extremely wasteful even if it were conceivable, as emphatically it is not. For the state has no material resources of its own; it must acquire them from the social body (often referred to as "civil society"), and can do so only if those resources are successfully produced and reproduced by that social body.

Voluntaristic projections and exhortations by the state authorities can be no substitutes in this respect. "The state is essentially a *hierarchical command structure.* As such, it derives its problematical legitimacy not from its claimed 'constitutionality' (which invariably happens to be 'unconstitutional' in its original constitution), but from its ability to *enforce* the demands placed upon it."[126] However, if there is a disjunction (or disruption) between the material reproductive resources of society and the state's role in making use of them, in that case the state loses its ability to enforce the—contradictory—demands placed upon it, which must result in a major crisis. Assuming the powers to define and impose on its own the demands themselves, in a wishful attempt to redress the earlier mentioned disjunction/disruption in the absence of a viable resource basis, the state can only aggravate the crisis itself by creating a vicious circle of wasteful enforcement that would have to be satisfied by even more wastefully secured enforcement. A great deal of the Stalinist management of Soviet postcapitalist society can be explained on the basis of such intractable contradictions. They blocked the road toward the only viable remedy: the progressive eradication of capital from the social metabolic process. For this eradication would be feasible only through the transfer of the powers of decision-making to the freely associated producers.

The solution attempted by Gorbachev and his followers on the basis of their tendentiously restricted political critique of the Soviet post-capitalist experience, under the conditions of capital's structural crisis, wanted to have it both ways. It wanted to retain central control over the "revitalized socialist market economy"—an authentic fantasy world—and at the same time exempt the controlling state authorities of their responsibility for the actual and potential failures by ascribing them to local managers and to the "unavoidable disfunctions" of the "market mechanism," which is in reality very far indeed from being a simple or complicated *mechanism*.

The propounders of perestroika were unable to see, or unwilling to admit, that "the inner logic of the totalizing market would tend toward the *restoration of capitalism* and its authoritarianism both in the workshop and in the ruthlessly 'efficiency-oriented' accumulation process of society at large."[127] Their notion of the "controlled

market" was not only utterly wishful but also self-contradictory. They did not seem to care that in their wishful conception "the only concrete meaning that one can properly ascribe to the anticipated 'control' of the market mechanism is that the latter must be put out of action at the point where it would become fully effective."[128] Thinking in self-contradictory terms was preferable to them. For what they could not contemplate even for a moment was a substantive democratization of their society through the progressive supersession of the existing structural hierarchies of which they were the privileged guardians. This is why they had to fail to meet the challenge posed by capital's structural crisis to their own system, preferring to move, instead, from their unstable post-capitalist society toward the full restoration of capitalism.

Saying these things is not done in hindsight. All quotations in this section—with the exception of the much earlier passage from *The Necessity of Social Control*—are taken from the first edition of *The Power of Ideology*. They testify to the fact that the dangers of capitalist restoration, and the major contradictions driving the Soviet state authorities in that direction, were visible way back at the time of Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika. This is why I argued in those days that "the fate of glasnost surely depends on the successful implementation of perestroika in the above [substantively democratizing] sense, and not simply on the—however necessary—improvement in the 'economic efficiency' of the country."[129]

Looking at the conditions of life today in the former Soviet Union, it is painfully clear that the great masses of working people ended up with neither glasnost nor perestroika, but with the heavy burden of unresolved problems for the future. The developments leading to that result must be firmly kept in mind by all of us. For the failures witnessed in the former Soviet Union could in no sense mean the end of the problems at stake. They remain on the agenda even more pressing today than ever before, in view of the tragically wasted decades, with all of their painful sacrifices, dramatically underlined by the deepening of our systemic crisis of which, undoubtedly, the Soviet implosion itself is a weighty constituent.

8.4 The Persistent Neglect of the National Question

ONE OF THE GREATEST impediments to the development of the much needed radical mass movement of the future is the persistent neglect of the national question in socialist ideology.

The reasons for this neglect had arisen both from some contingent but far-reaching historical determinations and from the complicated theoretical legacy of the past. Moreover, given the nature of the issues involved, the two happen to be closely intertwined.

In regard to the practical/historical determinations, we must remember first of all that the formation of modern nations has been accomplished under the class leadership of the bourgeoisie. This development took place in accord with the socio-economic imperatives inherent in the self-expansionary drive of the multiplicity of capitals from their originally very limited local settings toward ever greater territorial control, in ever-intensifying conflicts with one another, culminating in two devastating world wars in the twentieth century and in the potential annihilation of humankind in our own time.

A great thinker of the enlightened bourgeoisie, Kant, perceived at a very early stage of the system's unfolding the immense danger of such conflicts and violent confrontations. He postulated the ideal solution of a coming "perpetual peace" among the rivals, within the framework of a universally beneficial "cosmopolitan order" and its League of Nations. However, the solution stipulated by this great figure of the German Enlightenment was a noble illusion: a pure "ought to be." For Kant hypostatized that his "perpetual peace" was bound to prevail thanks to the "commercial spirit"—a concept he adopted from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. In reality, it was precisely the ultimately destructive and monopoly-producing struggle for economic and political domination, begotten by the idealized "commercial spirit" that necessarily resulted in the ravages of imperialism.

At a more advanced stage of capitalistic developments, when the bourgeois order was firmly consolidated in Europe and in North America, and most active in subjugating the rest of the world to the expanding empires of the dominant nations, Hegel offered an incomparably more realistic conception of the ongoing transformations than Kant, fully in tune with his war-torn age. But the philosophical justification offered by him for the prevailing and progressively more antagonistic state of affairs on an ever-extended scale was no less idealizing than the wishfully postulated solution of his philosophical ancestor. For Hegel had no theoretical difficulty, nor moral qualms at all, about accepting the complete domination of smaller nations by the "world historical nations." Nor indeed did Hegel concern himself with the tenability (or ultimately suicidal untenability) of the endless succession of wars in the future, with their increasingly more destructive modern weaponry "invented by thought and the universal"[130] that he considered both necessary and morally commendable.[131] All of that could be readily subsumed under the lofty concept of the self-realizing "World Spirit," thereby removing all theoretical obstacles from categorically decreeing: "The *nation-state* is mind in its substantive rationality and immediate actuality and is therefore the *absolute power on earth*."[132]

The system of interstate relations constituted under the self-expansionary imperatives of capital could only be incurably iniquitous. It had to enforce and constantly

reinforce the highly privileged position of the imperialistically poised handful of nations, and in complete contrast, it had to impose at the same time, with all available means, including the most violent "systematically invented" ones, a structurally subordinate position on all of the other nations. This way of articulating the international order prevailed not only against smaller nations but even when the countries concerned had incomparably larger populations than their foreign oppressors, as for instance India under the British Empire. As for the colonized nations, their conditions of economic and political dependency were ruthlessly enforced upon them by the dominant imperialist powers, thanks also to the subservient complicity of their indigenous ruling classes. Characteristically, the post-colonial changes had no difficulty whatsoever in reproducing, in all substantive relations, the earlier modes of domination, even if in a formally somewhat modified way, thereby perpetuating the long-established system of structural domination and dependency all the way down to the present. As the major Filipino historian and political thinker Renato Constantino pointed out about his country's experience:

> When the American forces invaded our infant Republic, unspeakable atrocities were committed to quell our forebears' fierce resistance. In a sense, it was easier to fight the enemy at that time because it was a clear presence, with a visible cruel and malevolent face. . . . The formal hoisting of the Philippine flag in 1946 did not really change things. The age of direct colonialism was immediately followed by the period of neocolonial control, when the North, through its ideology of free trade, continued to hold (as it still does) the levers of power.[133]

This is why Constantino—reminiscent of Lenin's assertion of the legitimate self-defensive nationalism of the oppressed nations[134]—stressed in an interview with *Le Monde* that "nationalism remains today an imperative for the peoples of the South. It is a *protection* in that it allows to assert one's sovereign rights, and it is a framework to *defend oneself* against the practices of the North for dominance. Nationalism does not mean withdrawal into oneself: it has to be open; but for that it must presuppose a *new world order* which—in contrast to what we see today—does not consist in the hegemony of a superpower and its allies, without respect for the young nations."[135]

Only through the force of a monumental miracle could capitalistic interstate relations of structural domination and subordination have become significantly different from the way in which they actually turned out in the course of historical development. For capital, as the controlling force of the economic and social reproduction process, cannot be other than strictly hierarchical and authoritarian in its innermost

determinations even in the most privileged imperialist countries. How could a social and political system—characterized by Marx in its capitalist variety by the "authoritarianism of the workshop and the tyranny of the market"—thus be equitable on the international plane? Capital's absolute necessity to dominate internally its own labor force may well be compatible with granting some limited privileges to its indigenous working population, for the purpose of chauvinistic mystification, from the extra margin of exploitative advantage derived from imperialist domination. But such practices do not introduce even the smallest degree of equality into the capital-labor relationship of the privileged imperialist country in which capital fully retains, and must always retain, the power of decision-making on all substantive issues. To suggest, therefore, that despite such unalterable internal structural determinations the external—interstate—relations of the system could be other than wholly iniquitous would be quite absurd. It would be tantamount to pretending that what is by its very nature deeply iniquitous produces genuine equality under the further aggravating conditions of necessarily enforced foreign domination.

Understandably, the socialist response to such a system had to be spelled out in terms of a most radical negation, stressing the need for a qualitatively different relationship among the great variety of nations, large and small, on the basis of the supersession of the prevailing antagonisms within the framework of a genuinely cooperative international order. The matter was, however, greatly complicated—and in reality gravely affected in the twentieth century—by the tragic circumstance that the first successful revolution that projected the socialist transformation of society broke out in tsarist Russia. For this country happended to be an oppressive multinational empire: a fact that significantly contributed to its characterization by Lenin as "the weakest link of the chain of imperialism," and as such a positive asset to the potential outbreak of the revolution: an assessment in which he has been proved completely right. But the other side of the same coin was that not only the grave socioeconomic backwardness represented immense problems for the future but also the terrible legacy of the oppressive multinational empire.

The failure to properly address the potentially explosive contradictions of national iniquity after Lenin's death carried with it devastating consequences for the future, ultimately resulting in the breakup of the Soviet Union. The contrast between Lenin's and Stalin's approach to these problems could not have been greater. Lenin always advocated the right of the various national minorities to full autonomy "to the point of secession," whereas Stalin degraded them to nothing more than "border regions," to be retained at all cost, in strictest subordination to the interests of Russia. This is why Lenin condemned him in no uncertain terms, insisting that if the views advocated by Stalin prevailed, in that case "the *freedom to secede from the union* by which we justify

ourselves will be a mere scrap of paper, unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great-Russian chauvinist."[136] He underlined the gravity of the damage caused by the policies pursued and clearly named the culprits: "The political responsibility for all this truly Great-Russian nationalist campaign must, of course, be laid on Stalin and Dzerzhinsky."[137]

Lenin never ceased to emphasize the importance of the full, not only formal but substantive, equality of all national groups. He repeatedly stressed not only the seriousness of the ongoing violations of proletarian international solidarity but also kept reiterating the Marxian point about the need to make "equality unequal" in favor of those who are disadvantaged and oppressed:

> The Georgian [Stalin] who is neglectful of this aspect of the question, or who carelessly flings about accusations of "nationalist socialism" (whereas he himself is a real and true "national socialist," and even a vulgar Great-Russian bully), violates, in substance, the interests of proletarian class solidarity; for nothing holds up the development and strengthening of proletarian class solidarity so much as national injustice. … Internationalism on the part of oppressors or "great" nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality of the oppressor nation, the great nation, that must make up for the inequality which obtains in actual practice. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question.[138]

Reading these lines no one can be surprised to learn that Lenin's sharply critical document, written in December 1922 when he was seriously ill, was suppressed by Stalin and published only after Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956.

After Lenin's death in January 1924, following his longtime incapacitating illness, all of his recommendations on the national question were nullified, and Stalin's "Great-Russian" policies, which treated the other nationalities as iniquitously subordinate "border regions," were fully implemented, contributing greatly to the *blocked development* that subsequently characterized Soviet society. Nor were the underlying problems resolved by post-Stalin changes, despite the prominence given to the publication of Lenin's damning comments in 1956. For Khrushchev himself, after castigating Stalin in early 1956, reverted to his methods by the autumn of the same year, repressing the Hungarian popular uprising of October by the force of arms. Later on the "Brezhnev doctrine" tried to legitimate explicitly and permanently the same untenable policies of reducing the occupied East European countries to the status of border regions of

Soviet "actually existing socialism." Moreover, even the approach of Gorbachev and his followers was characterized by the same sense of tendentious unreality as the post-Lenin theorizations and practices, as I tried to stress well before the implosion of the Soviet Union.[139] They maintained the fiction of the "Soviet nation," with its allegedly "unified self-awareness," naively or wantonly ignoring the explosive problems of the Russian domination of the "unified Soviet nation," notwithstanding the clear signs of a gathering storm that soon enough resulted in the breakup of the far from unified Soviet Union. At the same time they tried to justify the reduction of various national communities, including the Baltic, Byelorussian and Ukrainian, to the status of "ethnic groups." The total unreality of this approach could not have been more graphically encapsulated than what we find in the words of one of Gorbachev's closest collaborators, the principal officially anointed authority in the field, Julian Bromlei:

> The Soviet people is a *natural phenomenon* which differs from similar societies mainly in its Socialist parameters and corresponding spiritual values. Clearly, we should bear in mind that the *Soviet nation* consists of a variety of *ethnic groups.*[140]

Under Stalin's rule, the acceptance of such wanton unreality could be imposed with the help of authoritarian repressive measures, going as far as even the deportation of entire national minorities. Once that road had to be abandoned, nothing could make the terrible legacy of the oppressive tsarist multinational empire and the subsequent preservation of its antagonisms prevail. It was, therefore, only a question of time when and in what particular form the post-revolutionary Soviet state had to disintegrate under the intolerable weight of its manifold contradictions.

8.5 Crisis in the Western Socialist Movement

THE PERSISTENT NEGLECT OF the national question was, to be sure, not confined to the vicissitudes of the Soviet failure to face up to its dilemmas. The direct consequences of such failure were far-reaching in the international socialist movement in the sense that for many decades the adoption of a wholly uncritical attitude to the "Soviet model" was compulsory among the parties of the Third International, carrying with it theoretical confusion and strategic disorientation. Characteristically, in this respect, the Stalinist leader of the Party in Hungary, Mathias Rákosi, declared that "the criterion of Hungarian patriotism today, by which we must judge it, is our love for the Soviet Union." One can imagine the response generated by such remarks.

Nevertheless, the tendency in the West European socialist movement to move in the direction of a blind alley, regarding the national question and the closely associated issue of internationalism, appeared well before the Russian October Revolution. In fact, Engels bitterly complained forty-two years earlier, at the time of the discussion of the Gotha Program in Germany, that in the document preparing the unification "the principle that the workers' movement is an *international movement* is, to all intents and purposes, *completely disavowed.*"[141] The necessary radical negation of capital's existing order from a socialist perspective was inconceivable without the adoption of a consistent and in reality fully sustainable international position. However, the opportunistic maneuver aimed at securing the unification of the political forces involved in approving the Gotha Program carried with it serious nationalistic concessions for which a very high price had to be paid in the future. The total capitulation of German Social Democracy to the forces of aggressive bourgeois chauvinism at the outbreak of the First World War was only the logical culmination of that dangerous turn in German political development, sealing thereby also the fate of the Second International itself.

It is important to remember here that none of the four internationals founded with the expectation to make the power of international solidarity prevail against capital's hierarchical structural domination of labor have succeeded in fulfilling the hope attached to them. The First International foundered in Marx's lifetime as a result of the derailment of the workers' movement as an international movement toward the end of the 1870s, sharply criticized by Engels as we have just seen. The Second International carried within itself the seeds of this contradiction and turned them into inexorably growing plants, however small at first, waiting only for the historical opportunity—provided by the First World War—before the members of the International sided with the rival warring parties, thereby fatefully discrediting the whole organization. This badly discredited "Workers' International," whose constituent national members throughout the war continued to identify themselves with their own bourgeoisie and thereby ceased to have anything at all to do with the vital requirements of socialist internationalism, was later reestablished as an organ of socioeconomic accommodation and the institutionalized denial of the class struggle. Rosa Luxemburg's judgment summed up with great clarity the meaning of these developments by stressing that "in refuting the existence of the class struggle, the Social Democracy has denied the very basis of its own existence."[142] It was, therefore, only a question of time before the Social Democratic parties all over the world went on adopting a position openly in defense of the established order.

Against the background of the Second International's ignominious failure, the Third International was founded in the aftermath of the October Revolution.

However, as a result of the progressive imposition of Stalin's authoritarian policies, which treated international matters, including the relationship with the parties of the Third International itself, in strict subordination to Soviet state interests, this organization also failed to fulfill the role of developing genuine socialist internationalism. Its dissolution as the Communist International (the Comintern), and its metamorphosis into the Cominform—i.e., an international organization of information—did not solve anything. For even the Cominform was a one-way street. This was because any critique of the Soviet system remained an absolute taboo during Stalin's lifetime. And even after he died, Khrushchev's severe critique of his "personality cult" and of its negative consequences failed to address the fundamental issues of Soviet-type society as a mode of social metabolic reproduction, despite its ever intensifying crisis symptoms.

By the time the gravity of the crisis was acknowledged, under Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika, the envisaged corrective efforts were conceived in a way that was inseparable from embarking on the road for the restoration of capitalism. As to the Fourth International, founded by Trotsky, soon to be assassinated on Stalin's orders, it could never attain the status of an international organization with *mass* influence, despite the intentions of its founder. Yet, if the envisaged strategic vision cannot "grip the masses," in Marx's words, in that case the task of developing the necessary socialist internationalism and the appropriate *"communist mass consciousness"* (Marx again) cannot be accomplished.

Given this unfulfilled history of labor's attempts to produce an adequate organizational framework for asserting its vital interests in its international confrontations with capital, as the hegemonic alternative to the latter, we cannot turn away from the difficult question of why all this happened. After all, Marx characterized capitalistic developments a very long time ago, in his share of *The German Ideology*, in this way:

> Generally speaking, large-scale industry created everywhere the same relations between the classes of society, and thus destroyed the peculiar features of the various nationalities. And while the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests, large-scale industry created *a class which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is already dead.*[143]

Twelve years later, however, he had to acknowledge that the prospects for a socialist revolution had been greatly complicated by the fact that in the world as a whole the development of bourgeois society was still in the ascendant.[144] Moreover, further developments made these matters even more difficult and disappointing. The aggressive imperialist drive of the dominant capitalist countries became visible

only decades later—in its full extent well after Marx's death—bringing with it grave implications for the working class and the hoped-for "development of communist mass consciousness." This was dramatically highlighted right at the beginning of the First World War when countless numbers of workers, and not only their Social Democratic leaders, sided with their national bourgeoisies, instead of turning their weapons against their ruling class, as revolutionary socialists like Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg wanted them to do.

The national question inevitably assumed the form of polarization between the handful of oppressor states and the overwhelming majority of imperialistically oppressed nations: a most iniquitous relationship in which the working classes of the imperialist countries were deeply implicated. Nor was this relationship confined to direct military domination. The purpose of the latter—whenever it was brought into play either through some major military operations or through the exercise of "gunboat diplomacy"—was to secure the maximum feasible exploitation of labor in the conquered countries on a continuing basis, imposing thereby the characteristic mode of capital's social metabolic control ultimately in the entire world. This is why in the course of post–Second World War "decolonization" it was quite possible to abandon the direct military/political control of the former empires without changing the substance of the established relationship of structural domination and subordination, as befits the capital system.

The United States were the pioneers in this respect. They exercised direct military domination in some countries, whenever it suited their design, wedded to socioeconomic supremacy over the populations involved—like the Philippines, for instance. At the same time they secured the massive domination of the whole of Latin America in the form of imposing on the countries of the continent structural dependency without necessarily intervening militarily. But of course they unhesitatingly resorted to open or covert military interventions in their proclaimed "backyard" whenever the maintenance of their exploitative domination was put into question. One of their preferred ways of imposing their rule was the "indigenous" military overthrow of elected governments and the establishment of "friendly" dictatorships, with the most cynical and hypocritical justification for such acts on numerous occasions, from Brazil's military dictatorship to Pinochet's Chile. Nevertheless, for a long time their principal strategy for asserting their exploitative interests in the post–Second World War period was through the exercise of economic domination, wedded to the deceitful ideology of "democracy and liberty." This was well in tune with a determinate phase of capital's historical development, when the political/military shackles of the old empires proved to be rather anachronistic for realizing the potentialities of capital-expansion better suited at the time to neocolonial practices. The United States was in a nearly ideal position

in this regard, both as the most dynamic constituent of global capital in its drive to productive expansion, and as a country that could claim to have no need for a direct political/military domination of colonies, unlike the British and French empires. It is therefore highly significant—and in its implications for the survival of humanity most dangerous—that in our time this "democratic" superpower had to revert to the most wasteful and brutal form of military interventions and occupations in response to capital's structural crisis, in a vain attempt to resolve that crisis by imposing itself on the rest of the world as the master of global hegemonic imperialism.

8.6 Patriotism and Internationalism

IN THE LIGHT OF these developments we can clearly see that the potentiality of international solidarity put into relief by Marx, with reference to *"a class which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is already dead,"* not only did not come close to its realization but actually suffered a major setback through the successful unfolding of modern imperialism and of its subsequent transformation into a system of neocolonial and neo-imperialist structural dependency after the Second World War. This newer version of imperialism was (and remains) a form of domination no less iniquitous for the great masses of the working people than its predecessor. Accordingly, it is inconceivable to realize true internationalism without the radical emancipation of the many oppressed nations, not least in Latin America, from their continued domination by the oppressor nations. This is the meaning of legitimate defensive nationalism today as stressed from the very beginning by Lenin. A defensive nationalism that must be complemented by the positive dimension of internationalism in order to succeed.

International solidarity is a *positive potential* of capital's structural antagonist only. It is in harmony with *patriotism,* which is habitually confused in theoretical discussions even on the left with bourgeois *chauvinism*. This confusion happens to be quite often a more or less conscious excuse for denying the necessity for breaking the chains of exploitative structural dependency of which even the workers of "advanced capitalism" are undeniable beneficiaries, even if to a much more limited degree than their class antagonists. But patriotism does not mean identifying oneself exclusively with the legitimate national interests of one's own country, when it is threatended by a foreign power, or indeed by the capitulatory behavior toward one's own ruling class for which Lenin and Luxemburg rightly advocated turning the weapons of war against the internal class exploiters. It also means full solidarity with the genuine patriotism of the oppressed peoples.

The condition of realization of such patriotism is not simply a change in the prevailing interstate relations, countering thereby to some extent the foreign dictates of the established political, or military-political, dependency. Far from it. The condition of lasting success can only be a sustained struggle against capital's hierarchical structural domination, for as long as it takes, all over the world. Without it the now and then successful casting off of the earlier political-military supremacy of the foreign power can be reestablished, in the old form or in a new one, at the next turn of events. International solidarity of the oppressed, therefore, requires the full awareness and the consistent practical observance of these vital strategic orienting principles.

It is not accidental that the bourgeois form of nationalism can only be *chauvinistic*, which means simultaneously the necessary *exclusion* of the legitimate patriotism of the other nations. For capital either succeeds in dominating—both *internally*, its own labor force, and *externally*, the other nations with which it must periodically enter into major conflict—or it fails in exercising its indivisible control over the social metabolism as strictly defined by its own systemic imperatives. To share capital's control over societal reproduction with labor is just as absurd a notion (of Thatcherite conservative "people's capitalism" or, for that matter, of the fully accommodatory "third way" fantasy of social democracy) as the constantly promoted idea of a harmoniously functioning future world government, under the actually existing conditions of global hegemonic imperialism.

As a matter of innermost historical and structural determinations, all-round beneficial *internationalism* is totally incompatible with capital's necessary mode of operation, developed in the course of history as a multiplicity of particular capitals bent on conflictual exclusiveness and on grabbing the maximum feasible advantage to themselves. The material ground of this incompatibility on the international plane is the radical impossibility of introducing *substantive equality* into the capital system. Only the *formal camouflage of inequality* as equality is acceptable. To give a characteristic example, on December 13, 2003, the discussion of the projected "European Constitution" in Brussels ended in complete disarray. The issue at stake was both mystifying and farcical. Attempts were made to dress it up as a matter of high principle concerned with the noble observance of equality.

In reality the utterly hypocritical advocacy of the so-called *proportionality of voting* by the member states, as the proof of equitable intentions, had nothing whatsoever to do with genuine equality; only with the vacuous *formal transfiguration* of its diametrical opposite. For if in reality the question of equality could be taken seriously, in that case every member nation of the far from united European Union should be given *one* vote only, instead of allocating the disputed "27 or 29" votes to a few of them and much less to the others. Thus the pretended equality in terms of the *proportionality*

of voting rights is nothing more than a masquerade for the maintenance of the existing *gross disproportionality of economic and social-political powers* among the member states. These powers, which are the embodiments of deeply entrenched *substantive inequality,* are decidedly not going to change within the established framework of the "Union," whatever mystifying compromises are going to be reached in the end, as no doubt there will be, on the debated European Constitution. And though the practice of managing society's problems on the basis of vacuous formal equality is noisily pursued as the proclaimed objective of constitutional propriety, the institutional practice of *outlawing solidarity strikes*—a blatantly authoritarian measure of outrageous inequality, enacted in Britain under Margaret Thatcher and retained by her "New Labour" successors—together with the continued attacks in several countries on the workers' hard-won pension rights and on their shrinking social security benefits, is considered perfectly acceptable to the rulers of the European "democratic community."

Socialist internationalism is inconceivable without full respect for the aspirations of the working people of other nations. Only that respect can create the objective possibility of positive cooperative interchanges. Ever since its first formulation, Marxist theory insisted that a nation that dominates other nations deprives itself of its own freedom: a dictum Lenin never ceased to reiterate. It is not difficult to see why this should be so. For any form of interstate domination presupposes a strictly regulated framework of social interchange in which the exercise of control is expropriated by the relatively few. A national state that is constituted in such a way that it should be able to dominate other nationalities, or the so-called peripheral and border regions, presupposes the complicity of its politically active citizenry in the exercise of domination, thus mystifying and weakening the working masses in their aspiration to emancipate themselves.

Thus the radical negation of the long prevailing system of most iniquitous interstate relations is an absolutely unavoidable requirement of socialist theory. It provides the conceptual basis of *defensive* nationalism. However, the necessary positive alternative to capital's social order cannot be a defensive one. For all defensive positions suffer from being ultimately unstable, in that even the best defenses can be overrun under concentrated fire, given the suitably changed relation of forces in favor of the adversary. What is needed in this respect, in response to capital's perverse globalization, is the articulation of a viable positive alternative. That is, an international social reproductive order instituted and managed on the basis of the genuine equality of its manifold constituents, defined not in formal but in materially and culturally identifiable substantive terms. Thus the strategy of positive internationalism means replacing the absolutely iniquitous—and insuperably conflictual—structuring principle

of capital's reproductive "microcosms" (the particular productive and distributive enterprises that constitute the comprehensive "macrocosm" of the system) by a fully cooperative alternative.

The destructive drive of transnational capital cannot be alleviated, let alone positively overcome, at the international level through the action of particular national governments. The continued existence of the antagonistic "microcosms," and their subsumption under increasingly larger structures of the same conflictual type (like the giant transnational corporations, as they arise through the concentration and centralization of capital today), reproduces the temporarily placated conflicts sooner or later. Thus positive internationalism defines itself as the strategy to go beyond capital as a mode of social metabolic control by helping to articulate and comprehensively coordinate a non-hierarchical form of decision-making at the material reproductive as well as the cultural/political plane. In other words, by a qualitatively different form of decision-making in which the vital controlling functions of societal reproduction can be positively *devolved* to the members of the "microcosms," and thus the activities of the latter can be appropriately coordinated to embrace the most comprehensive levels, because they are not torn apart by irreconcilable antagonisms.

The point to stress here is that so long as "activity is not *voluntarily* divided,"[145] but regulated by some kind of unconscious quasi-natural process (theorized by the uncritical champions of the bourgeois order as a *natural* system, in a literal sense of the word, and thus forever insurmountable) in the form of international competition and confrontation, there must be in existence social structures capable of imposing on the individuals a structural/hierarchical (and not simply a functional) division of labor. (The fundamental structures of such an enforced hierarchical division of labor are, of course, the antagonistically competing social classes.) Conversely, even the potentially most destructive antagonisms are always reproduced on the broadest international plane, because capital cannot operate the reproductive "microcosms" of the social metabolism without submitting them to its strict vertical-hierarchical structuring principle of control.

Naturally, the same correlation remains valid for the positive alternative as well. Accordingly, the necessary condition for the genuine resolution (and not temporary postponement and manipulation) of conflicts and antagonisms, through socialist internationalism, is the adoption of a truly democratic-cooperative structuring principle in the social reproductive microcosms themselves. The positive self-management and "lateral coordination" of the associated producers on a global scale—as opposed to their now prevailing vertical subordination to an alien controlling force—first becomes possible only on such a basis.[146]

In this sense, the question of realizing the positive potentiality of socialist internationalism—beyond all chauvinistic/nationalist antagonisms, the way in which it was anticipated by Marx one hundred and fifty-eight years ago—cannot be raised without reference to the reproductive conditions of a radically different social order. We have to remind ourselves, again, of the relationship between potentiality and actuality. For the common interests of all working people can be practically realized when following the road toward a new social order becomes both necessary and viable in their attempt to extricate themselves from the perilous contradictions of their present-day predicament. Success depends on the maturation of certain conditions that turn a vital need—and its justifiable ideological advocacy, which could be legitimately indicated in that form many decades ago—into the *objective possibility* of a sustainable social development.

What is at stake, then, is not an abstract theoretical principle, and not even a positive *desideratum*, however desirable. What decides the issue in the final analysis is the fundamental difference between *abstract possibilities* (rightly condemned by Hegel as "bad infinity"), whose number can be multiplied no end without getting one step nearer to the desired aim, and the *objective possibility* of actual development in the advocated direction.

The ground for the feasible realization of the objective possibilities of socialist strategy, with its sustainable internationalist aspirations, cannot be other than the historically unfolding dynamics of the capital system's global transformations. This is significantly different today from its phase prior to the Second World War, and much more so in comparison to Marx's lifetime. We are certainly contemporaries to the system's transnational "globalization," although our view of what is actually evolving could not be more different from that of the uncritical defenders of the established order.[147] The latter must always find an "eternalizing" explanation for everything, also when some major crisis symptoms are undeniable even by them.

Characteristically, this is the way in which they interpret the already mentioned grave problem of chronic structural unemployment in evidence in all parts of the world. They cannot say that it does not exist, but they must turn it into a fictitiously positive asset. This they do by twisting the concept of structural unemployment to mean that it is unproblematically permanent because it is "only structural," in the sense of being an unavoidable consequence of universally beneficial "advanced technology." As such, it is not the inhuman and destructive manifestation of capital expansion at their system's present phase of unsustainable development, to be remedied by the institution of a viable alternative social reproductive order. It is simply a feature of the unalterable (natural) reproductive structure in existence, to be dealt with by the appropriate neutral technical/economic devices of expansionary "flexible casualization."

It is equally characteristic that when it comes to the question of actual historical developments on a global scale, which could in principle significantly change the existing conditions and relation of forces, the same people speak like the cunning horse-trader in a Hungarian adage: "*Ha akarom vemhes, ha akarom nem vemhes*." That is, "If it suits me, the mare is pregnant, if it doesn't, she is not." In the same way, the propagandists of the system suddenly forget their favorite fairy tale of all-justifying "globalization" whenever it happens to be inconvenient. Ignoring the precarious predicament of the overwhelming majority of humankind, as arising from the untenable domination of the rest of the world by a handful of "advanced capitalist" countries, they arbitrarily decree that the workers of the "advanced" countries shall never assume a radical critical position in relation to their own system. Thus in this regard there can be no change through globalization. Social democratic accommodation is supposed to remain with us to the end of time, even though the privileges sustaining it in a few countries are categorically denied to the billions of the "wretched of the earth."

In reality nothing could be more fallacious and crudely biased in its pretenses to ideological neutrality than arguing the proverbial horse trader's way. For the radical potentiality of labor, as the hegemonic alternative to capital—also its objectively feasible power for instituting a qualitatively different system of interstate relations—"can only be judged in terms of its proper frame of reference—i.e., the fully developed global system of capital—and not on the limited ground of a few privileged and exploitative 'advanced capitalist societies.'"[148] Consequently, one should either openly admit that the much propagandized process of globalization is a tendentious conservative fiction: a concept used only when it suits one's retrograde ideological convenience (as happens to be the case today on countless occasions); or one would have to leave open the question of prospective historical developments on the issue of labor's hegemonic alternative to capital's social metabolic order. For it is just as grotesque to project the universal diffusion of the favorable material conditions of the handful of highly privileged capitalist countries—which in reality must greatly rely for their privileges on the continued structural dependency and misery of the others, secured to them through the now prevailing differential rate of exploitation—as it is to suggest that potential changes negatively affecting labor in the dominant capitalist countries cannot happen at all, or if they do, they do not matter. It is quite absurd to say, or to quietly imply, that whatever happens to the standard of living of labor in the capitalistically advanced countries, under the conditions of capital's structural crisis and the resulting attacks on that standard—through the necessity of a downward equalization of the differential rate of exploitation on a global scale—that it is not going to alter in the slightest the attitude of capital's hegemonic antagonist from its present position of resignation or accommodation to one characterized by a potentially assertive combativeness.

International solidarity through which the required changes can be realized is not an abstract ideological postulate. It is materially grounded in the unfolding conditions—and contradictions—of actual historical development that deeply affect the totality of labor, even in the capitalistically most privileged countries. Raising the issue of international solidarity today cannot be seen as an idealistic moral imperative addressed to politically alert groups of workers. "It could not be defined simply as 'the work of consciousness upon consciousness,' even if the appropriate reconstitution of social consciousness is, of course, an integral part of the overall process. It is the necessary response to the objective challenge posed by the global articulation and integration of capital that in the course of twentieth-century developments (and particularly in the last few decades) acquired a most effective transnational dimension against its workforce. At the same time, it is a response made not only necessary but also materially feasible by the selfsame material structures of capital's transnational articulation which—in the absence of international solidarity—can be easily and with great efficacy used against the workers.... To be sure, what we can clearly identify here is a *potentiality* that cannot be turned into *actuality* without the development of the necessary *organizational framework* of international working class solidarity. Nevertheless, this is a potentiality sustained by the *material structures* themselves which *objectively* facilitate the necessary countermoves to the 'carefully controlled and coordinated'[149] domination of labor by capital at the present juncture of history."[150]

This is how the national and the international dimensions of emancipation come together. Capital, under the pressure of its structural crisis, is now forced to take back even those concessions it could confer in the postwar decades of Keynesian expansion on limited sections of labor. It is not possible to reverse these developments by a nostalgic advocacy of the particular privileges acquired in North America and in Western Europe in the "golden age" of postwar development; capital simply cannot afford them. It needs all the available resources for ever more absurd and potentially catastrophic military adventures and for maintaining its system of increasingly wasteful production dominating society. Today not even the achievement of the most limited demands of labor can be assumed, given their unaffordable impact on the structurally troubled global system. The local/national is becoming inseparable in our time from the global/international: in a sense of ultimately weakening, and not strengthening, capital's domination of labor, contrary to the self-serving propaganda of capitalist globalization. Under these circumstances, the failure to realize even some modest progressive objectives (not only in the economic field but also in politics, as shown, for instance, by the authoritarian measures of British "New Labour"), and the continued erosion of what was once taken for granted as the

self-proclaimed *raison d'être* of the capital system, call for the institution of a radically different social order.

8.7 The Immediate and the Long Term: Continuity and Change in Socialist Strategy

ANY ATTEMPT TO CONFRONT the ideological and political challenges of the future involves the need to draw up a balance sheet of the past and of the present. This is important for two main reasons.

First, the unavoidability of a critical reckoning with the dead weight and the paralyzing inertia of past strategies, some of which were highly dubious from the very beginning of their pursuit, despite their dominance in the form of (historically determined but unfulfilled) reformist expectations. Today they are not just dubious but quite untenable. For they have become totally anachronistic under the circumstances of capital's structural crisis. In this regard the accent is on the aspect of a radical negation and a *break* with past political strategies, made necessary by the implosion of the social democratic movement. Without such a radical negation of, and conscious break with, the disorienting tenets and false dichotomies of the reformist conceptions one can only continue fantasizing about a fictitious "universally beneficial *third way*" while remaining trapped in a hopelessly defensive position.

The second reason is equally important. Putting the accent not only on the critical side but also on the positive one, it refers to the need to make strategic use of the unavoidable *continuity* from our existing conditions to the future. This requires getting hold of those levers of the present that can be used—in accord with *the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity*—as the transformatory *links of mediation* toward the anticipated, qualitatively different but *sustainable,* alternative order. For only in mythology can a friendly god like Pallas Athena emerge fully armed from the head of Zeus. The strategic advocacy of a genuine socialist transformation cannot resort to such magic powers, no matter whose head one may wish to appeal to as an example. It must bring about the fundamental changes required for turning potentiality into actuality through the hard work of a radical restructuring of the existing order.

The actualization of the shared interests of the totality of labor, as the hegemonic antagonist of capital, can only be envisaged on condition that a qualitatively different way of regulating the social metabolism, on the basis of the *substantive equality of all*—without which the *divisive partiality* of our time is bound to prevail also in the future, in place of the common interests of all—should be capable of being *legitimately generalized (or universalized)* in the global order. But such generalization is impossible without the objective social dialectic of *continuity in change and meaningful change in*

continuity, made to work through the well-chosen *strategic mediations* of the present that point toward the advocated alternative social metabolic order of the future. The conditions of "advanced capitalism"—i.e., the frozen and totally untenable privileges of a handful of capitalistically advanced countries—*cannot be generalized* for the rest of the world because they are the tangible embodiments of the long prevailing one-sided relationship of structural domination and subordination. The existing order is erected on such—by their very nature incorrigible—foundations. What is at stake is the edifice itself and not a few of its more or less easily replaceable bricks. Consequently, the question of meaningful change cannot be arbitrarily divorced from confronting the fundamental issue of the deeply entrenched structural hierarchies in capital's global pecking order. In this sense, no matter how small might be the improvements projected for the future, if they are to be sustainable at all even in the sense of the usually conservative advocacy of "little by little," they first become feasible only if inserted into a broader framework of meaningful strategic change—that is: a potentially cumulative change leading to something significantly different and more commendable than what was there before, instead of being nullified, as usually happens, by the next "little by little" change,[151] and not as a way of mending and perpetuating the established order, under the transparent pretenses of changing it.

The smug triumphalism of the dominant ideological discourse, pretending at the same time also to stand above all ideology, tries to sweep all these problems under the carpet. However, it simply cannot be done. Too many formerly unquestioned solutions cannot remain any longer unchallenged, so as to fulfill their once institutionally secured and safeguarded function in the labor movement. Paradoxically, this came about as a result of the conflicts generated by the strong rightward shift of social democracy in the political spectrum, which was, instead, expected to tighten the institutional domination of reformism everywhere, and not simply in a few capitalistically advanced countries. Yet, contrary to conformist expectations, the deepening crisis of the system brings to the fore some uncomfortable questions concerned not with marginal issues but with the core beliefs of reformist social democracy in general. This is why the persistent attempts to sweep matters under the carpet cannot work today. For the reformist carpet itself has now become most problematical. Not so long ago it used to be the make-believe justification of everything, as the reader of *The Power of Ideology* can see in the discussion of Eduard Bernstein's "evolutionary socialism," with its principle of "waiting long enough" and, abracadabra, the existing problems shall be happily resolved, provided that we demolish the "dialectical scaffolding" of Marx's radical thought.[152] Later on the same vision of unreality was extended also over the unrealized past and present expectations of the "modernizing

Third World," which was to be brought under the same "advanced" carpet. The trouble is, though, that the carpet itself is now in question, because it is full of holes and cannot be stretched far enough to cover up the conflicts erupting even in formerly unsuspected places. Thus it would be extremely naive to believe today in the reformist recipe as a universal panacea.

In this respect it is a question of seminal importance what happened to the principal article of faith of "evolutionary socialism." At the time of its inception the Bernsteinian reformist creed stipulated that advocating faithfulness to the *ultimate aim* of the movement—that is, the strategic aim of a radical structural change—was a grave error, because the only thing that really mattered was the reform-oriented pursuit of some limited *immediate objectives*. Accordingly, a *false dichotomy* was set up, in the name of pulling down the superfluous Marxian "dialectical scaffolding" between the comprehensive *strategic* objectives of the socialist movement and the narrowest *immediate* demands that could be safely accommodated within the capital system's presupposed and reformistically accepted limits. The fact that *any* movement, and not only a radical socialist one, becomes completely blind by abandoning its overall aims, did not seem to matter. Rather, self-induced blindness and the ensuing accommodation turned out to be the overall strategic aim of the movement defined in this way: "The movement is everything, the aim is nothing." For a while, references to "reforms," in the service of "changing society" (nebulous though the latter had to be after dismissing the "ultimate aim" as mere scaffolding), could be retained, at least in the periodical electoral manifestoes. Later on, however, the idea of "reforms introduced in order to change society" even as a lip service had to be abandoned, as the impact of capital's structural crisis made all criticism of the system itself inadmissible. It is by no means surprising, therefore, that the British "New Labour" Party proudly defines itself today as "the friend of business" (of Big Business, that is).

What makes this matter extremely serious for the reformist political orientation of the Western labor movement dominant for a very long time is that the notorious but carefully promoted *false dichotomy* between "immediate objectives" and the "ultimate aim" has imploded in objective reality itself. The total unviability of reformist conceptions could be successfully hidden in the past under the all-justifying veil of capital's "concessions," which were assumed to become ever more extensive in every country as time went by. However, what actually happened was the exact opposite. In the course of historical development capital reached a stage when even the past concessions had to be taken back by the ruling order, with the help of ruthless anti-labor parliamentary legislation (actively supported by reformist social democracy), because they could no longer fulfill their erstwhile expansionary function. The virtual demise of the "welfare state" even in the capitalistically most advanced countries,

instead of its diffusion all over the world as once promised, bears an eloquent witness to this sobering thought.

Exposing the conservative nature of the false dichotomy that we are concerned with is not enough. It is equally necessary to set it in a proper perspective. The actual connection between the immediate demands and the orienting overall aims of the socialist movement is in reality most important, provided that it is assessed in terms of the objective dialectic of the strategic interrelationship manifest in it, as part of the changing historical determinations of our time, instead of being subsumed under a mystifying false opposition. What is crucial in this respect is that with the closure of the system's relatively undisturbed postwar expansionary phase and the dangerously narrowing margin of capital's profitable reproductive practices, bringing with them the imperative of an ever more callous exploitation of the global labor force, there can be no cumulative immediate improvements that in due course could add up to something significantly different, deserving thus the dedication of the people who belong to the movement. Rather, in order to make any sense at all, the relationship between the "immediate" and the "ultimate" must be turned around to set the proper priorities. For in our time—when capital can only yield strictly *tactical* benefits to labor, with a view of taking them back at the earliest possible opportunity "with compound interest"—the realization of even the most limited "immediate objectives" becomes feasible only as an integral and subsidiary part of the socialist movement's *hegemonic alternative* to the established order. Thus the immediate can be properly pursued only if it is conceived as the *strategic immediate,* defined by its inseparability from the *strategic longterm* and oriented by the overall primacy of the latter. In other words, only those partial improvements would be adopted as viable immediate strategic objectives that could not be more or less easily taken back, and therefore could acquire a truly cumulative character. Inevitably, this would also mean a resolute determination to defend in a combative way the chosen objectives, even if that would involve challenging the anti-labor legislative framework itself. Those who might object that this is "maximalism" should wake up to the fact that the worst kind of maximalism is in reality the vain pursuit of unrealizable—because with capital's structural limits they are only tactically and temporarily compatible—"minimal demands."

In strategic terms—because of the end of capital's long historical ascendancy and its replacement by nothing but the system's concern for survival at all cost, including the imposition of the most destructive course of action in the form of "preventive" and "preemptive" wars—what has appeared on the historical agenda is the urgent necessity for instituting labor's *hegemonic alternative* to the established social order. Only through such an alternative can the gruesome inequalities and devastating contradictions of the present be consigned to the past. For far too long the strategies of

the traditional left were formulated, explicitly or not, on the "realistic premise" that the envisaged improvements must be *affordable* by capital, leaving thus unchallenged the system itself. But today, as mentioned before, nothing of a lasting social advancement for labor is any longer affordable by capital. Consequently, all conformity to the formerly accepted socioeconomic premise of affordability can only bring frustration and ultimate self-defeat. This is why the positive dialectical interrelationship between the immediate objectives and the strategically all-embracing aims of the reconstituted radical socialist mass movement must be kept in the forefront of our attention.

8.8 The Need to Redress Structural Inequality

AS WE KNOW, THE World Social Forum has written large on its flag, as a way of summing up the main orienting principle of the social movements associated with it, "Another world is possible." Given the immense dangers humanity faces today, on an ever-growing scale, the phrase must be completed by rendering explicit what is implied in it. That is, "Another world is possible *and necessary.*"

If we want to change the established order into one from which the dangers of humanity's self-destruction are removed—an order that is at the same time rendered positively sustainable, so as to prevent the reproduction of the dangers in one form or another at some future date—it is necessary to identify the determinations at the core of the present system, which have brought with them our perilously uncontrollable predicament. All the more so because the determinations in question are often idealized, thereby erecting apparently insurmountable obstacles on the road toward the necessary change. It is not too difficult to see that so much needs to be *rectified* in our existing society before we can anticipate the sustainability of a new social reproductive order. The advocated new order can become *possible,* as our orienting principle firmly announces, above all through the radical elimination of the *structurally enforced inequality* between the "advanced capitalist" world and the tendentiously/paternalistically characterized "underdeveloped world," as if the countries so described did not belong to the same world ruled by the same system. And that is only the international dimension of the problem. The internal dimension, which secures the global domination of the existing social reproductive order, is characterized by the same contradictions of structurally enforced inequality as the overall international determinations of dependency, even if the working classes of "advanced capitalism" enjoy, for the time being (but certainly not forever), some significant privileges as compared to their counterparts in the rest of the world. Radical rectification is therefore necessary, not only to overcome a gruesome injustice. Inseparably

from that moral dimension, a radical rectification is also a matter of direct social reproductive concern, arising from the absolute imperative of securing the *sustainability* of a viable alternative social order.

One of the most important examples in this respect—perhaps *the* most important, clearly illustrating both the ahistorical idealization of a historically determined and extremely problematical social specificity, and at the same time the enormity of the obstacles erected on its tendentiously dehistorized foundation—is the way in which capitalist growth and expansion is treated in the dominant ideological discourse. As a result, everything is turned upside down, making the strictly historical—and *changeable*—become forever *unalterable,* and by the same token, what should be a *permanent* orienting principle of all productive activity, since it is directly concerned with the *natural substratum of human existence itself,* is irresponsibly subjected to the determinations of arbitrarily usable and myopic *conjunctural temporality.* In this way the actual ontological relationship between humankind and nature is totally misrepresented, with potentially devastating consequences, in the service of eternalizing the world of capital, so that there should not be even the faintest hope to escape from it under the changing historical circumstances. This is not "being economical with the truth" but the crude violation of it. For "despite the well-known attempts by vested interests to 'eternalize' the capitalist system of metabolic control, *no other mode of production was ever characterized by the structural imperative of self-expansion in the course of human history.* Thus contrary to much apologetic wishful thinking, there can be no a priori ground for anticipating the permanence of this system of control in the future. What needs explaining (and countering) is precisely the alienating preponderance of capital's power of domination *despite its uniqueness in history*, instead of being fallaciously metamorphosed into a *universal rule*."[153]

Uncritically defending and idealizing as universally commendable the capital system's imperative of self-expansion and unqualified "growth," despite their destructive implications and consequences, brings with it the persistent refusal to rectify the untenable iniquity of our world order. This incorrigibly exploitative system is driven by its *inner antagonisms*, both in its smallest constitutive parts and as a globally articulated whole. Extending its power into the most remote corners of the world in the course of history, in conformity to the imperative of self-expansion, was inseparable from the iniquitous concentration and centralization of the powers of decision-making, while condemning the overwhelming majority of humankind to endure the conditions of bare survival, if that. To raise the embarrassing question of *"What kind of growth?"* had to be absolutely incompatible with the system's blindly prevailing orienting principles. For the only "growth" that mattered and could be pursued was that of *capital expansion*, whatever the consequences. And the consequences—foreshadowing

the danger of not simply more or less limited ecological damage but altogether the destruction of the sustainable conditions of human existence on this planet—speak loud enough for themselves.

A system that cannot set limits to the imperative of self-expansion in a world of finite resources is clearly unsustainable in the longer run. But the truth of the matter is that the vital concern of rectifying the structurally entrenched inequalities of the global order is inseparable from setting the proper limits: by countering the imperative of destructive capital-expansion and its self-serving justification under the ideology of unqualified "growth." This concern also requires a critical examination of the generic advocacy of *The Limits to Growth*, by no means confined to the "Club of Rome." For such an approach is aligned with the same vested interests as its claimed opposite, in the service of justifying the conservative false dichotomy of *"growth or no-growth."* It takes for granted precisely what should be radically questioned: the globally established system of crying inequality, trying to freeze the existing relations under the pretended rationality of "no-growth" and the concomitant "global equilibrium in which population and capital are essentially stable."[154] In other words, the solution is wishfully projected in the form of—surprise, surprise!—Third World *population control,* addressing some *symptoms* with typical fetishistic quantification while leaving the *causal framework* of the system completely intact. This makes the whole enterprise not only highly conservative but also quixotic. At the same time the social meaning of the whole venture clearly surfaces when the principal intellectual figure of this approach curtly dismisses the fully justifiable real concern with equality as a mere "shibboleth of equality."[155]

However, contrary to the fetishistic dichotomy of "growth or no-growth," only a qualitative approach could work. For only a *qualitative redefinition of growth* would embrace the whole of humankind so as to rectify the existing relationship, on the basis of *substantive equality,* instead of continuing to exclude the overwhelming majority of human beings from the fruits of productive advancement, as before, throughout the long stretch of capital's historical ascendancy. Freezing the existing power relations in the name of establishing, under the present circumstances of structurally entrenched hierarchy of domination and subordination, "an essentially stable global equilibrium" (yet another fantasy world) is not going to help in the slightest. For growth—qualitatively defined and pursued—is more needed today than ever before in order to meet even the most elementary needs of the people who are condemned to manage on "less than one dollar per day," amounting in fact for countless millions to *less than forty cents per day.* There can be no advancement in this respect without qualitatively redefined growth, undertaken for the purpose of radically redressing the profound inequalities of the capital system.

Understandably, the growth in question can only be *selective* and oriented by the principle of *real economy,* focusing on the important question of growth in the existing *rates of utilization,* in contrast to the dominant productive practices ruled by *wastefulness* in the service of the imperative of capital's destructive self-expansion.[156] Here again, the advocated equality cannot be instituted without observing the guiding principle formulated by Marx, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, and reiterated by Lenin on several occasions, according to which the pursuit of substantive equality, in our determination to rectify the untenability of existing conditions, involves the conscious application of unequal measures. Those who find themselves deprived even with regard to their elementary needs must be—and fully deserve to be—*preferentially* (in a formal sense unequally) treated, including their desire for the necessary growth and productive advancement in their respective countries. This is how in a period of transition the dialectic of *continuity and discontinuity* can prevail, provided that it is firmly guided by the *overall aim* of moving toward a *globally generalizable*—because fully *equitable and non-adversarial,* and thus viable and sustainable—social order. The increasingly destructive contradictions of our planetary household cannot be remedied in any other way.

The advocacy of *equality* has been with us for a very long time: ever since the days when the earliest utopian counter-images to the existing reality were first formulated. However, in those early days, because of the prevailing conditions of productive development, equality could only mean the "equitable distribution of misery," inevitably burdened with the potential antagonism of "fighting for the lion's share." The Marxian socialist movement could not have anything to do with that. By the time Marx's principles were formulated, after the Industrial Revolution, the conditions of productive advancement had been much changed for the better. Marx himself positively responded to the ideas of a visionary who lived—and was executed for trying to organize a *Society of Equals* in favor of his ideas—in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789. The man in question was François Babeuf, who *qualitatively* defined the conditions of equality, on the basis of *human needs,* including the principle of "quantitative inequality in the service of substantive equality," which remains valid also today. This is how Babeuf argued his case: "Equality must be measured by the *capacity* of the worker and the *need* of the consumer, not by the intensity of the labor and the quantity of things consumed. A man endowed with a certain degree of strength, when he lifts a weight of *ten* pounds, labors as much as another man with five times the strength when he lifts *fifty* pounds. He who, to satisfy a burning thirst, swallows a pitcher of water, enjoys no more than his comrade who, but slightly thirsty, sips a cupful. The aim of the communism in question is *equality of pains and pleasures, not of consumable things and workers' tasks."*[157] The adoption of

these principles by Marx, in his discussion on the kind of distribution worthy of the higher phase of a socialist society (called communism, as Babeuf too called it eighty years earlier), based on the qualitatively different needs of the individuals, puts into relief a historical legacy that haunted humanity for many centuries. It took all those centuries of productive advancement to create its conditions of realization both as regards the individuals and their societies in their manifold interrelationships with one another. The task of setting the appropriate limits to the established social reproductive order—now uncontrollably driven by its inner antagonisms that render it incapable of accepting any rational limit—and rectifying at the same time the overpowering inequalities of the all-encroaching system, define the social agenda for the foreseeable future.

8.9 The Necessary Global Alternative

WHEN WE THINK OF the *necessary global alternative,* the starting point cannot be other than the acknowledgment of the existing constraints, so as to be able to counterpose the skeptical—and frequently even cynical—advocacy of "there is no alternative," a view very different from the tendentious misrepresentation of the unfolding trends of development as insurmountably "capitalist globalization."

The proper assessment of the global dimension of the capital system was always an integral part of the Marxian theory. In fact Marx was the first, far ahead of everybody else, to insist on the inescapability of the system's globally poised determinations and the ensuing *perverse universality* that must be overcome in due course by a positively defined global order. In the same spirit it was firmly stressed in *The Power of Ideology* that "it would be quite wrong to follow the skeptical or pessimistic advice of those who want to persuade us to abandon these concerns. For the *destructive universality* of capital cannot be countered by a withdrawal into the 'little world' of local skirmishes. Like it or not, there is no getting away from the historical predicament in terms of which only *global solutions* are conceivable to get to grips with our *global problems.* The socialist conception was envisaged right from the beginning as an alternative to the antagonistic universality of the capital system. … In the end the great historical issue of our epoch is bound to be decided precisely in terms of the universal—i.e., *globally* defined—viability (or failure) of these two systems of control in an inescapably intertwined world tending toward its full integration. For there are too many problems—some absolutely vital for securing the elementary conditions of human survival on this planet—to which other than *literally global solutions* are quite unthinkable."[158]

Humanity's move from capital's antagonistically fragmented national states to a positively sustainable global order is an absolute necessity, in the sense that human survival remains permanently threatened without achieving the required transition to such an order. When the great Cuban patriot José Marti stressed that *"Patria es humanidad"* (Our homeland is humanity), he was pointing in the same direction. What is clearly implied in the advocacy of a positively defined global order—one that can be considered a real homeland by all human beings—is that it is impossible to accomplish the historic task on our horizon without superseding the open and latent anatagonisms of the existing order.

The pivotal question of this historic task concerns the necessity to overcome the *hierarchical adversariality* of capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction. The radical restructuring unavoidable in this respect is tantamount to elaborating a qualitatively different form of social metabolic control. The nature of the new form can be summed up, quoting Marx's words, as a system based on *"a general plan of freely combined individuals."*[159] This means in simplest terms the replacement of labor's chains imposed by capital with the *cooperative ties* of the individuals and the various groups to which the individuals belong. Through this qualitative change they are enabled to establish a far superior and potentially much more productive form of *overall coordination* than what is feasible on the basis of the authoritarian external control of labor in capital's chain-gang system. In other words, the social metabolic control of freely combined individuals—instituted and constantly developed by the freely combined individuals themselves—makes possible the sustainability of a new productive order. For *sustainability equals the conscious control of the social metabolic process of reproduction by the freely associated producers* (which is, of course, the only feasible form of *self-control*), in contrast to the untenable, structurally entrenched, adversariality and ultimate destructiveness of capital's reproductive order.

The regulating principles of a sustainable socialist mode of social metabolic reproduction are incomparably more precise and firmly grounded than the wishful postulates of a fully globalized capitalist system under its harmoniously functioning "global government." For, as far as the latter is concerned, not only is there no sign whatsoever of it today but, much worse than that, the identifiable signs of development point in the opposite direction.

The regulating principles of an advanced socialist society are not confined to the unavoidable task of *negating* the worst contradictions of the existing order. They address with equal determination the *positive* requirements of securing the *long-term viability*—indeed the totally *open-ended and indefinite*, because constantly renewed, time-horizon—of society's conscious reproductive practices, in a *qualitatively* different way to the irrational narrowness of *capital's time-consciousness*. For capital, under

the pressure of its incorrigible systemic contradictions, cannot look ahead by more than a few years, and even that only in the form of chaotically interacting and often mutually cancelling fragments. This is well illustrated by the short-term margin of action of even the giant transnational corporations on the world market, exposing the vacuity of their claimed conscious strategies of control, not to mention the incomparably more constrained behavior of the great multiplicity of much more limited business enterprises, internally as well as internationally.

The question of time among the socialist regulating principles appears in two principal respects. First, regarding the meaningfully usable lifetime of the individuals, it makes necessary a radical departure from the prevailing conception of "free time" as something utterly devoid of sense. Capital must exploit the time of the individuals for its own—one and only feasible—purpose of securing *capital accumulation*. Anything beyond that must be degraded to the level of *useless time* or, in other words, *idle leisure.* This is because the necessary alternative use of the individual's lifetime is inconceivable without a social framework in which the growth of free time with unimpeded generosity is both actively/consciously encouraged, and finds positive outlets for its employment. Otherwise the danger arises of producing *social dynamite* in the form of frustrated "free time" denied of any meaningful outlets, as we find manifesting itself in a multiplicity of ways in our existing societies, from mindless vandalism to the painful consequences of a widespread drug culture. One can easily imagine how much greater the explosive danger of senseless idleness would become in capitalistically advanced societies if productive development could be allowed to release the maximum amount of free time potentially available over and above the *necessary labor time* now readily exploitable by capital. It would gravely intensify *chronic unemployment* and the social disruption inseparable from it.

The second respect in which the inescapable burden of time is clearly visible concerns society's reproductive activity in general, not only at a particular point in time but also in its *longest-term time-horizon*. This is the true meaning of *planning* worthy of its name. It is clearly shown in a quotation taken from a most illuminating interview with Harry Magdoff, published in *Monthly Review* in October 2002. The interview reports a conversation Magdoff had with Che Guevara:

> I said to Che, "What's important is that when plans are made, that the planners, the ones who come up with the directions and the numbers, should be involved in thinking about the actual policy alternatives in light of practical conditions."
>
> Whereupon he laughed and he said that when he was in Moscow, his host Khruschev, who was then the head of the Party and the government, took

> him around to see places as a political tourist. Traveling through the city, Che told Khruschev that he would like to meet with the planning commission. Whereupon Khruschev said: *"Why do you want to do that? They are just a bunch of accountants."*[160]

Those who dismiss the very idea of planning, on the ground of the Soviet implosion, could not be more wrong. For the sustainability of a global order of social metabolic reproduction is inconceivable without a proper system of planning, managed on the basis of *substantive democracy* by the freely associated producers. The failure of Soviet-type planning—adopted all over Eastern Europe—and therewith the doom of the Soviet-type system was determined by the imposition *from above,* by a *separate* body of decision-making, the increasingly problematical orders to which even the "bunch of accountants" had to respond unquestioningly, whereas the producers themselves were never even consulted, except through the periodic ritual of "enthusiastic approval." Decisions were also authoritarian in the sense that the projections were not allowed to be reexamined and changed once the plan was legally codified, often with very painful consequences for the people involved.[161] The time employed in this kind of planning process was *decapitated:* it had no *real future*, only the arbitrary projection of the present into a *wishful* and *voluntaristically imposed "future."* Such a wishfully postulated future could not be turned into reality precisely because of the political voluntarism that dominated society (this is what is characterized by Magdoff, in the passage quoted above, as "a political system resembling a war economy").

In reality the planning imposed in this way could only be *post festum*—i.e., haphazard and clumsily reactive backward at the next stage of the planning process, because of the unavoidable frustration arising from the voluntaristic projections. For the same reasons, it could never be truly *comprehensive*, nor could it aspire at becoming *long term*. Both characteristics are essential to a viable planning process, but realizable only if actively supported by the freely associated producers. Unstable *partiality,* instead of lasting *comprehensiveness* (despite the general projections of the politically commanded and overruled "bunch of accountants"), and the negatively reactive *post festum* determination of the adopted objectives, in place of the long-term *realizable future* of the decisions reached—on the basis of substantive equality and substantive democracy—by the producers themselves, instead of being imposed upon them *from above* by a *separate body.* These are the salient features contrasting the failed Soviet-type practice with the acutely needed planning system of the future. And when we examine more closely the planning practices of even the biggest quasi-monopolistic corporations of capitalist society, idealized and championed by people like John Kenneth

Galbraith,[162] it transpires that an astronomical distance separates them from the kind of planning that is both possible and necessary for a sustainable future order.

The system of planning described here certainly cannot be left to just a "bunch of accountants," nor indeed to a separate body of politicians commanding the producers by dictates from above. For the genuine and viable planning process of a new mode of social metabolic reproduction distinguishes itself from the known forms of partial and superimposed planning through being firmly oriented by a *qualitatively* different *socialist accountancy,* in contrast to the fetishistic *quantifying narrowness* of the past varieties.

This is what brings the two principal dimensions of time—the lifetime of the particular individuals and the broadest temporal determinations of their society—together. For *socialist accountancy* is unthinkable without a planning process in which the adopted objectives, based on the *needs of the individuals*—in their great variety and dynamic potential for fully activating the people involved for the realization of their own needs—properly *coalesce* into a viable mode of collective action. This is what gives meaning to the "general plan of the freely associated individuals."

The issue itself is an eminently *qualitative* one, because both the individuals' *needs* (which are qualitatively different by their very nature) and the conditions of their realization require continuous (truly non-adversarial, hence *mutually* modifiable) interchanges among the cooperatively associated individuals within a fully adaptable social framework. The results of these interchanges can be flexibly modified in the light of the rationally reexamined outcome of the freely adopted policies, in contrast to the structurally predetermined "one-way traffic" of all conceivable systems ruled from above. This is what makes possible the adoption of a qualitatively different approach to the question of *economy and waste*, once it becomes possible to overcome the structurally superimposed a prioristic determination of what the individuals are supposed to accept as "their needs," so decreed because they are profitably produced by a fetishistic system.

In the now dominant mode of social metabolic reproduction the meaning of a successful *economy* is perversely defined by the system's ability to multiply *waste*. The cancerous cultivation of "consumerism"—set against the callous denial of even the most elementary needs of the overwhelming majority of humankind—is the necessary consequence of the underlying social/economic determinations. And the perverse violation of the concept of economy does not end there. It is made worse by the way in which *abundance,* too, is defined. For in this framework of economic management the concept of *abundance* constitutes a vicious circle with *unlimited and unlimitable waste*. It cannot be stressed enough, capital's self-expansionary imperative is totally incompatible with the concept of economy as *economizing*. Accordingly, our society is declared

to be "advanced," which really means nothing more than *capitalistically advanced,* on the basis of its capacity to produce and sustain waste, in the service of continued capital-expansion at whatever cost. The more abundantly society can produce waste, and live with it, the more advanced it is supposed to be. This determination poisons also another vitally important relationship: that between *scarcity and abundance.*

Evidently, no society is sustainable in the longer run, in a world of finite resources, without fully addressing the difficulties involved. However, what we find in our "advanced" societies is that they add insult to injury. First, they multiply waste, inflicting thereby great injury not only on the present but also on the future, and then they add to the insult as well by pretending that they have solved the problem of *scarcity* by *abundance.* Astonishingly, this "solution" is based on the ground that they can produce waste "in great abundance," and get away with it, which is supposed to provide both the proof of overcoming scarcity and its peculiar justification. To be sure, a world in which people are condemned to have a "hand-to-mouth" existence, could not have anything to do with this kind of relationship between scarcity and wasteful abundance. In reality, scarcity is made worse through the reproductive practices of our "advanced societies" instead of being eliminated, as often claimed.[163] For, in order to make an inroad into the millennial reign of scarcity, it would be necessary to remove the conditions that continue to *reproduce* it, on an *ever-enlarged scale*, due to the antagonistic inner determinations of our social reproductive order. Only a *quality-oriented socialist accountancy* could show a way out of this quagmire of contradictions.

Naturally, in this respect, as well as in all of the others mentioned so far, the role of education is crucial. Without a different conception of education—meaning the cooperatively managed *self-education* of the freely associated producers, oriented toward, and inspired by, the production and satisfaction of their *genuine needs*—there can be no way out of the vicious circle of producing scarcity on an ever-enlarged scale. In the absence of the cooperative self-education of equals capable of understanding the real meaning of *economy*, everything would remain at the mercy of the interests vested in the maximal reproduction of *artificial needs,* in their inseparability from the profitable perpetuation of scarcity.

This conception of education is radically different not only from the narrow instrumentality and fetishistic determinations of the dominant educational practices, managed in subordination to the needs of capital-expansion, which, as we know, must be *internalized* by the individuals as "their own needs." It qualitatively differs also from the well-meaning but unreal educational counter-image to the existent produced by the *utopian socialists*. The unavoidable dividing line from the latter concerns the reproduction of *substantive inequality* in its vision, inherited from the utopistically negated order. This is why Marx criticized the utopian "division of society into two parts, one

of which [the educators] is superior to society"—a view forgetful of the fact that *"the educator must himself be educated."*[164]

The new conception of education is not confined to a limited number of years in the life of the individuals but, due to its radically changed functions, embraces all of them. The "self-education of equals" and the "self-management of the social reproductive order" cannot be separated from one another. The self-management—by the associated individuals—of the vital functions of the social metabolic process is an *ongoing,* and inevitably *changing,* enterprise. The same goes for the educational practices that enable the individuals to fulfill those functions as constantly redefined by themselves, in accord with the changing requirements of which they are the active agents. Education, in this sense, is truly *continuing education.* It can be neither "vocational" (which means in our societies the confinement of the people involved to narrowly predetermined utilitarian functions, deprived of any power of decision-making), nor "general" (which is supposed to teach the individuals, in a patronizing way, the skills of thinking). These notions are the arrogant presumptions of a conception rightly castigated by Gramsci when he wrote: "There is no human activity from which all intellectual intervention can be excluded—*homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*."[165] Yet our dominant educational practices are based precisely on such, in the long run totally untenable, separation. By contrast, continuing education, as a necessary constituent of the socialist regulating principles, is inseparable from the meaningful practice of *self-management*. It is an integral part of the latter both as representing at first the *formative phase* in the life of the self-managing individuals, and, on the other hand, in the sense of enabling a *positive feedback* from the educationally enriched individuals, with their appropriately changing and equitably redefined needs, to the overall determination of society's orienting principles and objectives.

This is how a new type of *coordination* of the social reproductive process becomes feasible. It is based on and sustained by the principle of equitable *horizontality*, instead of the existing forms of *hierarchical structural domination,* justified by capital in the name of "orderly production and distribution," as if there could be no alternative to it. What is true, of course, is that the overall regulating principles of societal reproduction (operative in its macrocosm) cannot be significantly different from the inner regulators of the constitutive parts—the microcosms—themselves. Accordingly, the antagonistically structured microcosms of capital's social order cannot be *coordinated horizontally*. They must be *subsumed vertically* under a top-down order of control, no matter how large the constitutive parts that must be subsumed in this way. Capital cannot control the social metabolic process in any other way. Similarly, the principle of *overall horizontal coordination* is compatible only with a type of microcosm which in its innermost nature is fully *equitable*—and in that sense also properly *self-managed*

and therefore not burdened with *inner antagonisms*, in contrast to all varieties of "top-down control." The production of the self-managing individuals' real needs, in their inseparability from a radically different conception of education indicated above, is an absolutely necessary requirement of the successful adoption of *horizontal coordination* as the overall regulating principle of control in a sustainable future order.

The final point that must be mentioned in this brief summary of the regulating principles of a genuine socialist order concerns the question of *exchange*. Our societies are dominated by the insuperable contradictions of the *exchange of commodities*. The present system regulating this exchange is not only *based* on substantive inequality but also *reinforces* that inequality as the productive powers of society increase, instead of diminishing it as ritualistically promised but never realized. All pious hope attached to the virtues of resolving this problem by "progressive taxation" came to nothing, reversing even the little change in postwar taxation for the worse in recent years. Not surprisingly, the notorious gap beween the rich and the poor continues to increase, in line with the concentration and centralization of capital, absurdly enhancing *the rule of wealth over society,* when the only meaningful advancement should be measured in terms of the degree to which the *rule of society over wealth*—feasible only through a *qualitative* change—could be shown to be in the process of being instituted. The required change is conceivable only if a very different regulating principle is brought into play regarding exchange. This would involve a fundamental reorientation of the pursued social objectives from the *exchange of commodities* to the *exchange of activities* by the self-managing individuals, as advocated by Marx.[166] Without the adoption and appropriate consolidation of this regulating principle, also the planning process is bound to be vitiated, bringing through the back door an authoritarian command structure for determining the productive targets and regulating the distribution of the products.

Contrary to the accusations of our adversaries, there is absolutely nothing unrealizable about the regulating principles of a globally viable future social reproductive order as discussed in this section. What is really unrealizable, instead, are the projections and promises of the existing order, characterized by sharpening contradictions even today, not to mention their increasingly destructive prospects for the future. The expectations of utopian socialists were indeed unrealizable for a clearly identifiable reason. They assumed, as mentioned before, the continued substantive inequality of the social order, even as reformed by their professed enlightened concerns. And that was the principal defect of their conception. It had to nullify all of their expectations, however sincerely believed and noble in their intent.

It is most telling that those who deny the possibility of a viable socialist transformation base their refutation not simply on ignoring the crucial *difference*, regarding

equality, between the advocated Marxian regulating principles and those of the utopian socialists, so as to subsume the former under the latter and to dismiss all of them as "hopelessly utopian." Worse than that, by a sleight of hand they themselves arbitrarily assume that *inequality as such is absolutely insurmountable*, and then triumphantly deduce from that assumption that any alternative to it is necessarily unrealizable. All this seems to be right and proper, in accord with their "rational procedure." In truth, their argument is based on the gross violation of logic, although it seems to follow, as they say, that the socialist regulating principles are unworkable and their objectives unrealizable. For what is claimed by them to "follow" does not follow from anything other than what has been fallaciously/circularly assumed right from the beginning.

8.10 The Social Subject of Emancipation and the Power of Emancipatory Ideology

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE and necessary. Necessary not in the sense of a fatalistic predetermination but as an urgent and deep-seated need whose realization, or failure to actualize, decides so much for the future. It is obvious that it is not enough to hope for a positive outcome. Ernst Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung* (Principle of Hope) is on its own not up to the task, however noble and passionate might be one's commitment to it. The structural antagonisms and explosive contradictions surveyed on these pages have their powerful material grounding, and the paralyzing social inertia arising from that grounding must be countered by a force capable not only of the required radical *negation* but also of *positively* instituting a sustainable alternative order. For the "possibility" advocated with reference to "another world" cannot be turned into a lasting reality without the sustained work of the social emancipatory agency equal to the task.

During the last decade we have seen some dramatic confrontations of a predominantly spontaneous movement with the repressive forces of the ruling order. A great variety of groups took to the streets, expressing in a forceful way their condemnation of the gross inequalities of our society, protesting with defiance and courage against the crippling impositions of the established order. This eruption of dramatic dissent represents a major departure not only from the traditional left entrapped by the parliamentary "democratic rules of the game" but also from the "lobbying type" endorsement and respectful submission of "single-issue" concerns to the attention of the economic and political personifications of capital, without challenging the system itself. The groups involved confronted some truly fundamental issues of our time, from the economic decisions reached in the usual authoritarian way at governmental summits and at conveniently prefabricated WTO meetings to the cynical

announcement of wars under totally false pretenses. The numbers of people actively involved in these radical protests in different parts of the world could be counted not in thousands but in many millions. Characteristically, the guardians of the ruling order pretended in their public responses to the manifestations of dissent that nothing noteworthy had happened and refused to adjust their dangerous policies, no matter how great the numbers. It is therefore far from surprising that the protesting groups wholeheartedly embraced the idea that "another world is possible." For their grave concerns cannot be attended to in the present order. With these largely spontaneous developments what clearly appeared on the historical agenda is the need and the positive potentiality of combining the multifaceted groups of protest, including the radical elements of the traditional left and the once greatly neglected hundreds of millions of the peasantry, into an emancipatory force capable of consciously fighting for the envisaged alternative.

This also means the necessary reexamination of the restrictive conceptions of the past. For the social subject of emancipation cannot be arbitrarily/voluntaristically predefined. It can create the conditions of success only if it embraces the totality of sociological groups that are capable of coalescing into an effective transformatory power within an adequate strategic framework of orientation. The common denominator or strategic core of all these groups cannot be "industrial labor," whether "blue collar" or "white collar," but *labor as the structural antagonist of capital*. This is what objectively combines the historically produced and varied interests of the great multiplicity of social groups on the emancipatory side of the class divide into the *common* interest of *labor's hegemonic alternative to capital's social order.* For they all have to play their important active role in securing the transition to a qualitatively different order.

Indeed, it is the awareness of this thoroughly *objective,* even if for the time being still rather latent on account of capital's power of division and fragmentation, *common interest* that makes possible the clear identification of the tangible and literally vital demands of our time, as indicated above, under which the multiplicity of laboring social groups can be brought together within an adequate strategic framework. This is the ground on which it is possible to overcome the conflicting interests of sectionally opposed groups of labor, thereby realistically anticipating the successful rearticulation of the socialist movement, in the spirit of combining its most varied groups into a *truly comprehensive* emancipatory social subject. What Isabel Rauber writes in a remarkable book about Latin America is valid also for the rest of the world in which potentially unified labor must be engaged in its historic confrontation with capital. As she puts it: "In Latin America today [there] does not exist a particular social or political subject which could arrogate to itself the role of being the subject of transformation; that subject can only be articulated as a *plural subject,* which can define

and express itself in a proper way only if it assumes the form of a *popular subject*.... In this sense, the challenge confronts us today as the necessity to eliminate the fracture between the class and the party, linked simultaneously to the task of overcoming the historical fracture between party, class and people(s)."[167]

To succeed in this historic task, it is necessary to create a new mode of operation of the radically rearticulated socialist movement. Mirroring in labor's political confrontations with capital the adversary's hierarchical mode of operation was understandable under determinate historical circumstances, reflecting the movement's—by now totally anachronistic—defensiveness. But for the same reason of the once unavoidable defensiveness of the movement, this form of mirroring could not bring lasting success even on the limited political plane, and indeed even less so in laying the necessary foundations of a new social metabolic order of humanity's self-reproduction. The now emerging multifaceted social emancipatory force can only prevail if it articulates itself on the basis of very different principles of human interchange and organization.

The reconstitution of the socialist movement—on the basis of substantive equality inconceivable on capital's inalterably hierarchical ground—is the necessary precondition for meeting the historical challenge that confronts us. It is at the same time also the promise of a viable way of regulating our mode of social metabolic reproduction once capital's destructiveness is brought under control and the fractured pieces inherited from the old order are put together in a sustainable framework. In this way the truly equitable organization and mode of action of the emancipatory movement can be carried forward into the future, in that its innermost constitution also represents, already in its constitutive phases, *anticipations* of a new—*genuinely associative*—way of engaging with the tasks that may arise.

The concept of *participation* is of seminal importance in this respect. It is valid both in the present and in any emancipated society of the future. Its meaning in the first place, under the present circumstances, is not simply a more or less limited involvement in discussions, often reduced to the vacuous ritual of ineffective "consultation" (followed by dismissive superiority), but the progressive acquisition of the alienated powers of decision-making by the structural antagonist of capital who transforms in due course its members into the social body of freely associated producers. As to the future, no matter how distant, participation means the creative exercise of the acquired powers of decision-making to the benefit of all, bringing to the fore the rich human resources of the combined individuals to such an extent that could not even be dreamed about, in its absence, in the earlier forms of society. This is how the fully equitable mode of social interchange discussed earlier can combine the principle of meaningful *autonomy*—a prerequisite to the individual's self-realization—with the necessity of *overall structural coordination*. Only in that way is it conceivable to

transform the operation of the social metabolic process of reproduction into a liberating—because coherently/cooperatively, and not wastefully/adversarially—integrated whole.

There can be no illusions about the difficulties in confronting capital and its more than willing state. "The British Government's role in the [1984] miners' strike provides a very clear example of how the state can intervene in capital's favor. Contrary to the elementary rules of good business practice praised by the former head of General Motors, the capitalist state in Britain could plan its anti-labor action in the way of a 'carefully controlled and coordinated *amassing of excessive inventories'* [of coal], with the hardly even concealed purpose of provoking the miners into a strike action which—given the total resources of the state—they could not win. . . . Also, the state authorities, with the *full cooperation of the judiciary,* intervened in the dispute in every possible way, depriving the strikers of their legitimate claims and the National Union of Mineworkers of all its funds. In addition, massive sums were expended by the state during the one-year dispute—estimated at around five to six billion pound sterling [in 1984]—in order to defeat the strike. And perhaps most important of all, by mobilizing the forces of international capital as well as the British state's international connections (including its ability to secure supplies of coal even from Poland), the confrontation was organized in such a way that it should put an end to *'intransigent unionism'* in general, and not simply to bring a particular industrial dispute to its conclusion. Calling the miners *'the enemy within'* and boasting about 'seeing them off' served the purpose of *deterrence* against radical unionism in general, whenever it might appear with *unintegrable* claims. It is important to stress all this, in order to have a realistic assessment of the forces lined up against the cause of socialist emancipation."[168]

Tragically, the victory of Margaret Thatcher's reactionary government against the British miners was also due to the failure of working-class solidarity. Internally, by the behavior of the Labour Party under the leadership of Neal Kinnock, deserting the miners at the crucially important final phase of their dispute, foreshadowing thereby the full integration of "New Labour" into the established order. And internationally, by the involvement of the Polish Union calling itself "Solidarnosc," which, clamorously belying the ideal writ large on its flag, sided with the oppressive British government instead of denying the supply and shipping of coal to Britain in that critical moment.

There can be no doubt about it, without developing and deepening solidarity among the forces pressing for the realization of an alternative order, their efforts—no matter how dedicated the people participating in the particular confrontations, willing to endure hardship and make the required sacrifices, as they must do in a year-long strike—cannot succeed against their adversary. "For a long time, the forces

of socialist emancipation were greatly handicapped by capital's ability to assume a *conflict-attenuating transnational mode of functioning* while denying its equivalent to its labor force trapped within the confines of various particularistic determinations and divisions. The necessity to overcome such determinations and divisions through the reconstitution of materially anchored international solidarity represents the greatest challenge to labor for the foreseeable future."[169] Navel-gazing chatter about the merits of "little récits" against "grand narratives," enveloped in the dense fog of "postmodernity,"[170] is not going to make any difference in this respect. "It is inconceivable to realize the socialist potentialities with which our historical time is pregnant without activating *the power of emancipatory ideology.* For without the latter the working classes of the capitalistically advanced countries cannot become 'conscious of their interests,' let alone 'fight them out'—in solidarity and effective cooperation with the working classes in those 'other' parts of the one and only real world—to a positive conclusion."[171]

9. Alternative to Parliamentarism

Unifying the Material Reproductive and the Political Sphere

Dedicated to the memory of General Vasco Gonçalves (1922–2005),
deeply committed radical socialist Prime Minister of
the Portuguese Revolutionary Government

9.1 / IN 1995, TWO YEARS before the formation of Tony Blair's government in Britain, I was writing in sharply negative terms about *"the coming Pyrrhic electoral victory"* of "New Labour."[172] My concern in anticipating a social and political disaster to come after the self-deceiving electoral "victory" was not simply the state of the British Labour Party. Rather, it was the much broader significance of the political developments we had to witness for a long time, resulting in very similar retrograde transformations not only in Britain but in the Western labor movement in general. I argued that "as things stand today, labor as the antagonist of capital is forced to defend its interests not with one but with both hands tied behind its back. One tied by forces openly hostile to labor and the other by its own reformist party and trade union leadership."[173] And I concluded my reasoning with these lines:

> Under these conditions the alternative facing the labor movement is either to resign itself to the acceptance of such constraints, or to take the necessary steps to untie its own hands, no matter how hard that course of action might be. For nowadays the former reformist leaders of labor openly admit, as Tony Blair did it in a speech delivered in Derby appropriately on April Fool's day, that "The Labour Party is *the party of modern business and industry in Britain*."[174] This represents the final phase of the total betrayal of everything belonging

> to the old social democratic tradition that could be betrayed. . . . The only question is, how long will the class of labor allow itself to be treated as April's Fool, and how long can the strategy of capitulating to big business be pursued beyond *the coming Pyrrhic electoral victory.*[175]

As we all know, many years have now passed in Britain since the establishment of the "New Labour" government. The Pyrrhic electoral victory turned out to be worse than possibly even the worst expectations. All of the anti-labor legislative measures of the most reactionary Conservative government in Britain for decades—Margaret Thatcher's government, once loudly denounced by the Labour Party in opposition—have been retained by the new government, with the full complicity of the dominant trade union leadership. At the same time some representatives of big business were rewarded not only with significant economic and financial advantages but even with long-lasting ministerial and key advisory positions. But perhaps the most disastrous aspect of the "New Labour" government is the total servilism—and cynicism, wrapped up for public consumption in unctuous hypocrisy—with which it participated, and continues to participate, in genocidal American military adventures, ignoring in the most authoritarian way the protest of even millions of people demonstrating against them in Britain. And it makes no difference in this respect whether the Washington orders are received from the "brotherly" Democratic president Bill Clinton or from the head of the most extreme Republican administration in history, George W. Bush. The only consistency that seems to be required is conformity to the transatlantic orders with appropriate servilism and hypocrisy even when the stakes concern undeniable and growing military destruction.

There is a tendency to ascribe the deplored characteristics of social and political development to personal aberrations and betrayals, wishfully anticipating their solution by some future changes in personnel. This is to some extent understandable because personalizing matters in that way remains within the framework of explanation to which the people involved are well accustomed. However, calling for a very different line of approach does not mean denying the role of personal aberrations and betrayals in the field of politics. There are far too many rewards that induce politicians to side with the perpetuation of the established order. Such rewards are inseparable from the alienated character of institutionalized politics in our societies, divorced from the great masses of the people and thereby usurping with ease the role of decision-making. But precisely for that reason of systemic determination it would be quite wrong to attribute the persistent negative political developments primarily to personal betrayals, even if at a certain level of political interchanges their significant contributory role is undeniable. For the uniformity with which these characteristics

persist in the capitalist societies underlines the need for a very different explanation. The underlying contradictions and determinations are much more serious than what could be made intelligible simply in personal terms.

When we talk about the undoubtedly most problematical development of the reformist labor movement in the twentieth century, it is necessary to face up to the grave structural problems of our "democratic politics" if we want to find a more plausible explanation to what continues to go hopelessly wrong in regard to genuine socialist expectations than the suggested question-begging "personality" failure and associated corruption. These structural problems reach back to a much earlier stage in the historical past than the twentieth century and, worse, continue to exercise their negative impact today more strongly than ever before. It is absolutely necessary to face up to them. For the deep-seated *social determinants* that *favor* the appearance of capital's willing personifications in positions of command also in the labor movement—no matter how clearly identifiable—must be not only convincingly accounted for. They must be also objectively *countered* on a lasting basis if we want to avoid their reappearance at the next round of more or less routinized personnel changes within the framework of the parliamentary political system that regulates our "democratic societies."

Unfortunately in this regard we encounter two major difficulties opposed to the necessary radical critique. First, the customary *self-referentiality* of political discourse, offering both diagnoses and remedies strictly confined to the institutionalized setting of political decisions and ignoring the way in which the fundamental material interests of the ruling social metabolic order determine the outcome of the renewed conflicts and antagonisms. (Naturally, the one-sided personalization of political betrayals is well in tune with the self-referentiality of politics.) And the second major difficulty arises from the way in which the parliamentary system itself is treated in traditional political discourse. For it tends to be proclaimed as the necessary center of reference of all legitimate change. Criticism is admissible only in relation to some of its minor details, envisaging potential correctives precisely for the purpose of patching up to some extent the established framework of parliamentary politics, even when its increasing vacuity cannot be denied,[176] and leaving the structurally well-entrenched political decision-making process itself as before. In other words, parliament as such is treated as a taboo, excluding the legitimacy of advocating the institution of a viable radical alternative to the parliamentary entrapment of working-class politics. This is a very grave matter. For without instituting a radical alternative to parliamentarism there can be no hope of extricating the socialist movement from its present situation, at the mercy of capital's willing personifications even in its own ranks.

9.2 / THE NECESSARY ALTERNATIVE TO parliamentarism is closely linked to the question of real *participation,* defined as the fully autonomous self-management of their society by the freely associated producers in every domain, well beyond the (for some time obviously necessary) mediatory constraints of the modern political state.

On the face of it the major difference between our concern with participation and the necessity to find a viable alternative to parliamentarism is that whereas full participation is an absolutely fundamental and permanent regulative principle of socialist interrelations—in no matter how advanced and how distant a form of socialist society—the need for producing a strategically sustainable alternative to parliamentarism is immediate, unavoidably and with urgency facing us. However, this is only the most obvious aspect of the important problem of how to liberate the socialist movement from the straitjacket of bourgeois parliamentarism. It has another dimension as well, concerned with the much broader and ultimately no less unavoidable challenge which is usually referred to in the socialist literature as "*the withering away of the state.*"

The apparently prohibitive difficulties of that vital Marxian project apply with equal relevance and weight to both *participation* and to the enduring way of unifying the material reproductive and the political sphere as the envisaged radical alternative to *parliamentarism.* Indeed, when we consider the historic task of making real "the withering away of the state," self-management through full participation and the permanently sustainable overcoming of parliamentarism by a positive form of substantive decision-making—in opposition to politically confined formal/legal—are inseparable.

As an issue the necessity to institute a valid alternative to parliamentarism arises from the historically specific political institutions of our own time, as they have been transformed—much for the worse, to the point of becoming a force of paralysis, instead of potential advancement—in the course of the twentieth century, bitterly disappointing all hope and expectations once held by the radical socialist movement. For the ironic and in many ways tragic result of long decades of political struggle within the confines of capital's self-serving political institutions turned out to be that under the now prevailing conditions the working class has been *totally disenfranchised* in all of the capitalistically advanced and not so advanced countries. This condition is marked by the full conformity of the various organized working-class representatives to the "rules of the parliamentary game." Naturally, the parliamentary game is massively prejudged against the organized force of labor by the long established and constantly renewed power relations of capital's materially and ideologically most effective rule over the social order in its entirety. In this sense social-democratic capitulation, though claiming to represent the "real interests of the working class," in fact fully completed the vicious circle of this process of total disenfranchising from which there can

be no escape without radically overcoming—in a truly sustainable way—the historically anachronistic parliamentary system itself.

The contrast between the actually existing conditions of our time and the promises of the past could not be greater. Particularly when we remind ourselves of the political developments of the last third of the nineteenth century and labor's hope invested in them. As we all know, well before that time the working-class movement appeared on the historical stage and made its first advances as an *extra-parliamentary movement.* The last third of the nineteenth century, however, produced a significant change in that respect, with the formation and strengthening of *mass* parties that began to orient themselves, in their majority, toward the gradual conquest of the political domain by electoral means, so as to introduce—through consensual legislative intervention—the required far-reaching and lasting structural reforms in society as a whole. As a matter of fact, as time went by, the mass parties of the working class were able to show some spectacular successes in strictly electoral terms, adopting and nourishing, as a result, the most problematical anticipation of a corresponding success, *"in due course,"* also in the material power relations of society. This is how social-democratic reformism became dominant in the working-class parties of the most powerful capitalist countries, marginalizing at the same time the radical wing of the labor movement for several decades.

But the "due course" hoped for never arrived and never could arrive. Instituting a radically different social order within the self-serving parameters of capital's social metabolic control could be from the very beginning nothing more than a *contradiction in terms*. Whether the advocated political and social strategy was called, by Eduard Bernstein and his followers, *"evolutionary socialism,"* or *"conquering the commanding heights of the economy"* by Harold Wilson and others, the long promised land repeatedly proclaimed by such strategies could only be the leisurely march toward the *never-nowhere-land* of a fictitious future, in the end clamorously and completely *left behind* by British "New Labour"—as well as by German and many other Social Democratic parties all over the world—without ever getting nearer to it even by one inch.

Moreover, what makes this problem even graver is that some of the most important and also electorally successful parties of the radical left, constituted within the framework of the Third International, in forceful explicit condemnation of the irretrievable historical failure of the social-democratic Second International, followed—this time really *in due course*—the same disastrous path as the parties they had strongly denounced and dismissed earlier. It is enough to think in this respect of the "parliamentary road to socialism" pursued by the Italian and the French Communist parties. Indeed, the Italian Communist Party (once the party of no less a revolutionary figure than Antonio Gramsci)—after indulging in the other fantasy-strategy of

"the Great Historic Compromise," disregarding or perhaps genuinely forgetting that it takes at least two to make a real compromise, otherwise one can only compromise oneself—re-baptised as the "Democrats of the Left," so as to fully accommodate itself to the service of capital's "democratic" social order. And when we recall that Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Party—once upon a time Lenin's own party—presumed to himself the power and the right to *dissolve the Party by decree,* and could actually get away with such an authoritarian move in the name of "glasnost" and democracy, is a clear indication that something fundamentally wrong must be redressed in these matters. Nostalgia of the past is not going to offer any solution to the underlying issues.

All this is not said "in hindsight," an expression customarily used in order to deflect criticism and justify the failed strategies of the past, together with the role undertaken by the people who were once themselves responsible for imposing them, as if there could be no alternative to following such a course of action until the "hindsight" appeared on the horizon. The historically documented real state of affairs could not be more different. For the most far-sighted and profoundly committed advocates of the radical socialist alternative, who were active at the time when the fateful derailment of the organized socialist movement was beginning to gather pace—Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg—clearly diagnosed the unfolding dangers, demonstrating not in hindsight but right then the theoretical and political vacuity of the unfulfillable "evolutionary" prescriptions. And when at an even earlier stage of this process of ultimate capitulatory integration into the bourgeois parliamentary system Marx sounded his unmistakeable warning, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program,* that there should be "no compromise about principles," his warning had to remain a voice in the wilderness.

The forces of organized labor had to make their own experience, however bitter in the end such experience turned out to be. For a long historical period ahead there seemed to be no alternative to following the elusive promise of "the line of least resistance" by the great majority of the labor movement. The promises and temptations of solving the highly complex problems of society through the relatively simple processes of parliamentary legislation were too great to be ignored or bypassed until bitter experience itself could reveal that the structurally entrenched and enforced inequality of the material power relations in capital's favor had to prevail also in the institutionalized political setting, notwithstanding the ideology of—in reality strictly *formal,* and never *substantive*—"democratic choice" and electorally safeguarded "equality." In fact, the objectively secured institutional entrapment of labor was further complicated by the corruptive impact of the electoral machinery and the "majority-seeking" apologetic ideology associated with it. As Rosa Luxemburg characterized these aspects of the problem a long time ago:

> Parliamentarism is the breeding place of all the opportunist tendencies now existing in the Western Social Democracy. . . . It provides the soil for such illusions of current opportunism as overvaluation of social reforms, class and party collaboration, the hope of pacific development toward socialism, etc. ... With the growth of the labor movement, parliamentarism becomes a springboard for political careerists. That is why so many ambitious failures from the bourgeoisie flock to the banners of the socialist parties. . . . [The aim is to] *dissolve* the active, class-conscious sector of the proletariat in the *amorphous mass of an "electorate."*[177]

Naturally, the perversely self-justifying ideology of the pretended democratic respect for the mythical "electorate" could be conveniently used for the purpose of arbitrarily, and often corruptly, controlling the political parties themselves and nullifying the possibility of instituting even minor "gradual reform," as the depressing historical record of the twentieth century clearly demonstrated it, resulting in the complete disenfranchising of the working class. It was therefore by no means accidental that attempts to introduce major social changes—in the last fifteen years in Latin America, for instance, notably in Venezuela and later in Bolivia—were coupled with a forceful critique of the parliamentary system and the establishment of constitutional assemblies as the first step toward the advocated far-reaching transformations.

9.3 / SIGNIFICANTLY, THE CRITIQUE OF the parliamentary system is almost as old as parliament itself. The exposure of its incurable limitations from a radical perspective did not begin with Marx. We find it powerfully expressed in Rousseau's writings. Starting from the position that sovereignty belongs to the people and therefore it cannot be rightfully alienated, Rousseau argued that for the same reasons it cannot be legitimately turned into any form of representational abdication:

> The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be its representatives; they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive acts. Every law the people has not ratified in person is null and void—is, in fact, not a law. The people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken; it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing. The use it makes of the short moments of liberty it enjoys shows indeed that it deserves to lose them.[178]

At the same time Rousseau made the important point that although the power of legislation cannot be divorced from the people even through parliamentary

representation, the administrative or "executive" functions must be considered in a very different light. As he put it: "In the exercise of the legislative power, the people cannot be represented; but in that of the executive power, which is only the force that is applied to give the law effect, it both can and should be represented."[179] In this way Rousseau put forward a much more practicable exercise of political and administrative power than what he is usually credited with or indeed is accused of by his detractors, even on the left.

In the tendentious misrepresentation of Rousseau's position both of the vitally important principles of his theory, also usable in a suitably adapted form by socialists, have been disqualified and thrown overboard. Yet the truth of the matter is that, on the one hand, the power of fundamental decision-making should never be divorced from the popular masses. At the same time, on the other hand, the fulfillment of specific administrative and executive functions in all domains of the social reproductive process can indeed be *delegated* to members of the given community, provided that it is done under rules autonomously set by and properly controlled at all stages of the substantive decision-making process by the associated producers.

Thus the difficulties do not reside in the two basic principles themselves as formulated by Rousseau but in the way in which they must be related to capital's material and political control of the social metabolic process. In order to establish a socialist form of decision-making, in accordance with the principles of both inalienable rule-determining power (i.e., the "sovereignty" of labor not as a particular class but as the universal condition of society) and delegating specific roles and functions under well-defined, flexibly distributed and appropriately supervised rules would require radically restructuring capital's antagonistic material domain. The process would indeed have to go well beyond what could be successfully regulated by considerations derived from Rousseau's principle of inalienable popular sovereignty and its delegatory corollary. In other words, in a socialist order the *legislative* process would have to be fused with the *production* process itself in such a way that the necessary *horizontal division of labor*[180] should be appropriately complemented by a system of self-determined *coordination* of labor, from the local to the global levels.

This relationship is in sharp contrast to capital's pernicious *vertical division of labor,*[181] which is complemented by the "separation of powers" in an alienated and, on the laboring masses, unalterably superimposed "democratic political system." For the vertical division of labor under the rule of capital necessarily affects and incurably infects every facet of the horizontal division of labor, from the simplest productive functions to the most complicated balancing processes of the legislative jungle. The latter is an ever denser legislative jungle not only because its endlessly multiplying rules and institutional constituents must play their vital part in keeping firmly under

control the actually or potentially challenging behavior of recalcitrant labor, watchful over limited labor disputes as well as safeguarding capital's overall rule in society at large. Also, these legislative processes must somehow reconcile at any particular temporal slice of the unfolding historical process—to the extent to which such reconciliation is feasible at all—the separate interests of the plurality of capitals with the uncontrollable dynamics of the totality of social capital tending toward its ultimate self-assertion as a global entity.

Naturally, the fundamental changes required for securing and safeguarding the socialist transformation of society cannot be accomplished *within* the political domain as constituted and ossified during the last four hundred years of capitalist development. For the unavoidable challenge in this respect necessitates the solution of a most bewildering problem. Namely, that capital is the *extra-parliamentary force par excellence* of our social order, and yet at the same time *completely dominates parliament* from the outside while pretending to be simply a *part of it,* professedly operating in relation to the alternative political forces of the working-class movement on a *fully equitable* basis.

Although in its impact this state of affairs is profoundly misleading, our concern is not simply a question of deceptive appearance to which the political representatives of labor personally fall victim. In other words, it is not a condition from which the now deceived people could be in principle personally extricated through the proper ideological/political enlightenment, without any need for radically changing the well-entrenched social reproductive order as a whole. Regrettably, it is much more serious than that. For the false appearance itself arises from *objective structural determinations,* and it is constantly reinforced by the dynamics of the capital system in all of its transformations.

9.4 / IN ONE SENSE THE underlying problem can be briefly characterized as the historically established *separation of politics*—pursued in parliament and in its various institutional corollaries—from society's *material reproductive dimension,* as the latter is embodied and practically renewed in the multiplicity of productive enterprises. As a matter of *contingent historical development,* capitalism as a social reproductive order had to unfold and assert itself against the then prevailing feudal political and material reproductive constraints. At first this did not take the form of a unified political force frontally confronting the feudal political order. That happened relatively late, at the particular historical stage of the victorious bourgeois revolutions in some major countries, by which time the material ground favoring the capitalistic processes was well advanced in their societies. The first inroads of capitalist development were made through the emerging multiplicity of productive enterprises, free in their local context

from the political constraints of feudal serfdom. They were in actuality becoming more significant in the course of materially conquering an increasingly more important share of the dynamically changing overall societal reproduction process.

However, the successful advancement of the material reproductive units was very far from the end of the story, despite its one-sided theoretical conceptualizations, for the political dimension was always present in some form. In fact, it had to play an ever greater role, notwithstanding its peculiar articulation, the more fully developed the capitalist system had become. The great multiplicity of *centrifugal* material reproductive units had to be brought somehow together under the all-embracing political command structure of the capitalist state, so that capital's social metabolic order should not fall apart in the absence of a cohesive dimension.

The wishful presumption of the all-powerful regulating *"invisible hand"* appeared to be a suitable alternative explanation to the actually very important role of politics. The illusions necessarily associated with the unfolding capitalistic developments were well illustrated by the fact that at the point in time when the system was becoming ever more consolidated and also politically safeguarded by the capitalist state, after the successful defeat of the feudal adversary a century earlier in the civil war and the "glorious revolution," an outstanding figure of classical political economy, Adam Smith, wanted to ban altogether the "statesman, council or senate whatever" from significant involvement in economic affairs, dismissing the very idea of such involvement as "dangerous folly and presumption."[182] The fact that Adam Smith adopted this position was well understandable, since he held the view that the capitalist reproductive order represented *"the natural system of perfect liberty and justice."*[183] Accordingly, in a similar conception of the reproductive order there could be neither *need* nor an admissible *conceptual space* for the regulatory intervention of politics. In Smith's view, politics could only interfere with such a "natural system"—one said to be fully in tune with the requirements of liberty and justice—in an adverse and detrimental way, since it was already ideally preordained for the good of all by nature itself and perfectly administered in that sense by the "invisible hand."

What was completely missing from Adam Smith's picture was the always vital question of actually existing and *inherently conflictual power relations* without which the dynamics of capitalist development cannot be made intelligible at all. However, the acknowledgment of such conflictual relationship would make it absolutely essential to offer an appropriate form of *political* explanation as well. Understandably, that could not be offered by the great Scottish economist. For in Smith's theory the place of social conflictual power relations was taken by the mythically inflated concept of the *"local situation,"* coupled with the notion of the corresponding particular enterprises locally owned by the purely self-interested individuals who unconsciously—but

nonetheless for the benefit of the whole of society, ideally—managed their productive capital under the mysterious guidance of the "invisible hand." This local-oriented individualistic—yet harmoniously all-embracing and universally beneficial—conception of capital's insuperably conflictual power relations was very far removed from reality even in the age of Adam Smith himself, not to mention its "globalized" variety today.

The great defect of the variety of such conceptions, of which there were many even in the twentieth century, was the failure to recognize and theoretically explain the *immanent objective connection*—which always had to prevail despite the deceptive appearance of unalterable separation—between the capital system's material reproductive and political dimension. In fact. without the immanent relationship of the two dimensions the established social metabolic order could not possibly function and survive for any length of time.

However, it is equally necessary to underline in the same context that the paradoxical interrelationship of the two vital dimensions of the capital system—deceptive in its appearance but rooted in objective structural determinations—also has far-reaching implications for successfully instituting the socialist alternative. For it is inconceivable to substantively overcome the established order simply through the political overthrow of the capitalist state,[184] let alone by gaining victory over the forces of exploitation within the given framework of parliamentary legislation.

Expecting the solution of the fundamental structural problems primarily through the political overthrow of the capitalist state cannot address on a lasting basis the mystifyingly compartmentalized but necessary connection between the inherited capital system's material reproductive and political dimension. This is why the historically viable radical reconstitution of the indissoluble unity of the material reproductive and the political sphere on a permanent basis is and remains the essential requirement of the socialist mode of social metabolic control.

9.5 / IGNORING OR DISREGARDING THE harsh reality of capital's conflictual power relations, from the earliest stage of the system's emergence to the *"democratic"* present, and above all transubstantiating the authoritarian subjection and ruthless domination of labor within those power relations into the pretended *"equality"* of all individuals, was an unavoidable concomitant of viewing the world from capital's vantage point, even in the writings of the greatest and most progressive intellectual figures of the bourgeoisie. What had to be obliterated by the adoption of capital's vantage point, from the very beginning, was the blood-soaked history of the *"primitive accumulation"*[185] in which the emergent new ruling class continued the well-secured exploitative practices of the preceding one—the feudal landed property. This perverse structural domination had to remain the general rule, even if it had to assume a

new form, putting thereby into relief, again, the significant *historical continuity* of the varieties of age-old class oppression and exploitation.

On the common ground of that affinity, appropriately redefined in accord with the nature of capital, the *permanently necessary presupposition* of the new productive order of "free labor" had to be forcefully perpetuated, despite the professed creed of "freedom and equality." The necessary practical presupposition behind the myth of "free labor" was, of course, the *exclusive proprietorship* of the all-important controlling *means of production* by a tiny minority, and the simultaneous—ultimately *politically safeguarded* by the state—exclusion of society's ovewhelming majority from them. At the same time, the brutal reality of the materially/reproductively as well as politically/ideologically enforced exclusion of the overwhelming majority of the people from the controlling powers of the social order—which could not have been more remote from, indeed diametrically opposed to, any idea of a genuine "ethical state"—had to be kept under the seal of deep silence in the self-images of the new mode of social metabolic control. This had to be the case even in the best self-images conceived from capital's self-serving vantage point. This is how the mystifying separation of politics from the material reproductive dimension could both fulfill its conservative ideological/cultural function and at the same time be celebrated as forever unsurpassable. Thus Hegel, for instance, offered in his system the most ingenious and philosophically absolutized separation of the openly self-serving material reality of "civil society" and the political "ethical state," which he postulated as the ideal corrective to the unavoidable defects of "civil society."

Reversing the actual causal order, Hegel mystifyingly depicted the vital determination of being *self-serving egotistic* as if it was directly emanating from the individuals themselves, although in reality it was immanent to capital's insurmountable ontological ground. Such a historically constituted ontological ground was in reality *imposed on the individuals* who could not opt out from operating within the framework of the given social metabolic order. Consequently, the individuals had to *internalize* the system's *objective self-expansionary imperative*—without which that system as such could not possibly survive—as if it sprang out of the inner core of their own *nature-determined* personal aims and purposes, as Pallas Athena was supposed to have sprung out of the head of Zeus fully armed. In this way Hegel was able not only to produce a philosophically absolutized dualism of capital's social order (its "civil society" and its "ethical political state") but also to glorify at the same time the historical development corresponding to the claimed "realization of freedom" in it as "the true *Theodicaea:* the justification of God in history."[186]

The critique of these conceptions, in all their varieties, is highly relevant today, for maintaining the dualistic conception of the relationship between civil society and the

political state can only bring disorienting strategies, irrespective of which side of the adopted dualist vision takes precedence over the other in the envisaged course of action. The unreality of parliamentary projections we are familiar with is well matched in this respect by the utter fragility of the expectations attached to the idea of resolving our major problems through the postulated institutional counter-force of "civil society."

The adoption of such a position can only result in being trapped by a very naive conception of the nature of "civil society" itself and by a totally uncritical attitude toward a great multiplicity of NGOs, which, belying their self-characterization as Non-Governmental Organizations, happen to be well capable of happily coexisting with the dominant retrograde state institutions on which they depend for their financial existence. And even when we think of some organizations of far greater importance than particular NGOs, like the trade unions, the situation is not much better in this regard. Consequently, to treat trade unions, in opposition to political parties, as somehow belonging to "civil society" alone, in virtue of which they can be used against the political state for a profound socialist transformation, is no more than romantic wishful thinking. For in reality the institutional circle of capital is made of the *reciprocal totalizations* of civil society/political state that deeply interpenetrate and powerfully support one another.

There can be no realistic strategy of socialist transformation without firmly pursuing the realization of the *unity of the political and the material reproductive dimensions* in the organizational domain. The great emancipatory potential of the trade unions consists precisely in their capability to assume (at least in principle) a radical *political role*—well beyond the rather conservative political function which they now, on the whole, tend to fulfill—in a conscious attempt to overcome the fateful separation of labor's "industrial arm" (themselves) and its "political arm" (the parliamentary parties), split asunder under the capitalist integument of both of them through the acceptance of parliamentary domination by the majority of the labor movement in the course of the last one hundred and thirty years.

The appearance of the working class on the historical stage was only an *inconvenient afterthought* to the parliamentary system. That system was constituted well before the first organized forces of labor attempted to voice in public the vital interests of their class. From capital's standpoint the immediate response to such inconvenient but growing "nuisance" was the rather untenable rejection and exclusion of labor's political groups. Later, however, a much more adaptable idea was instituted by the more agile political personifications of capital: that of *taming* in some way the forces of labor. It took at first the form of the paternalistic parliamentary sponsorship of some working-class demands by relatively progressive bourgeois political parties, and later still the acceptance of the legitimacy of working-class parties in parliament

itself, though of course in a *strictly circumscribed* form, compelling them to conform to "the democratic rules of the parliamentary game."

Inevitably, this meant to such parties of labor nothing less than "freely consenting" to their own effective *accommodation,* even if they could maintain for a fairly long time the illusion that in the fullness of time they would be able to radically redress the situation through parliamentary action in their own favor. This is how the original, and potentially alternative *extra-parliamentary force of labor* has been turned into a *permanently disadvantaged* parliamentary organization. Although this course of development could be explained by the obvious weakness of organized labor at the *beginning,* arguing and justifying in this way what had actually happened simply begs the question under the present circumstances in favor of the social-democratic parliamentary blind alley. For the *radical alternative of gaining strength* by the forces of the working class through organizing and asserting themselves *outside parliament*—in contrast to the defeatist strategy followed for many decades, all the way to the *complete disenfranchising of the working class* in the name of "gaining strength"—cannot be dismissed so lightheartedly, as if a truly radical alternative was an a priori impossibility. Especially since the need for sustainable extra-parliamentary action is absolutely vital for the future of a radically rearticulated socialist movement.

9.6 / THE UNREALITY OF POSTULATING the sustainable solution of the grave problems of our social order within the formal/legal framework and corresponding constraints of parliamentary politics arises from the fundamental misconception of the structural determinations of capital's rule, as represented in all varieties of theory that assert the dualism of civil society and the political state. The difficulty, insurmountable within the parliamentary framework, is that since capital is *actually* in control of all vital aspects of the social metabolism, *it can afford* to define the separately constituted sphere of political legitimation as a strictly *formal/legal* matter, thereby necessarily excluding the possibility of being legitimately challenged by parliamentary politics in its *substantive* sphere of socioeconomic reproductive operation. Directly or indirecly, capital controls *everything,* including the parliamentary legislative process, even if the latter is supposed to be fully independent from capital in many theories which fictitiously hypostatize the "democratic equality" of all political forces participating in the legislative process. To envisage a very different relationship to the powers of decision-making in our societies, now completely dominated by the forces of capital in every domain, it is necessary to radically challenge capital itself as the *overall controller* of social metabolic reproduction.

What makes this problem worse for all those who are looking for significant change on the margins of the established political system is that the latter can claim

for itself genuine constitutional legitimacy in its present mode of functioning, based on the historically constituted *inversion* of the actual state of the material reproductive affairs. For inasmuch as the capitalist is not only the "personification of capital" but simultaneously functions "as the personification of the *social* character of labor, of the *total workshop* as such,"[187] the system can claim to represent the vitally necessary productive power of society vis-à-vis the individuals as the basis of their continued existence, incorporating the interest of all. In this way capital asserts itself not only as the de facto but also as the *de jure* power of society in its capacity as the objectively given necessary condition of societal reproduction, and thereby as the constitutional foundation to its own political order.

The fact that the constitutional legitimacy of capital is historically founded on the ruthless expropriation of the conditions of social metabolic reproduction—the means and materials of labor—from the producers, and therefore capital's claimed "constitutionality" (like the origin of most constitutions) is unconstitutional, is an unpalatable truth that fades away in the mist of a remote past. The *"social productive powers* of labor, or *productive powers of social labor,* first develop historically with the specifically capitalist mode of production, hence appear as something *immanent* in the capital-relation and *inseparable* from it."[188] This is how capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction becomes *eternalized and legitimated* as a lawfully unchallengeable system. Legitimate contest is admissible only in relation to some *minor aspects* of the unalterable overall structure. The real state of affairs on the plane of socioeconomic reproduction—i.e., the actually exercised productive power of labor and its absolute necessity for securing capital's own reproduction—disappears from sight. This is partly because of the ignorance of the far from legitimable historical origin of capital's "primitive accumulation" and the concomitant, frequently violent expropriation of property as the precondition of the system's present mode of functioning; and partly because of the mystifying nature of the established productive and distributive relations. For "the *objective conditions of labor* do not appear as subsumed under the worker; rather, he appears as subsumed under them. Capital *employs* Labor. Even this relation in its simplicity is *a personification of things and a reification of persons*."[189]

Nothing of this relationship can be challenged and remedied within the framework of parliamentary political reform. It would be quite absurd to expect the abolition of the *"personification of things and the reification of persons"* by political decree, and just as absurd to expect the proclamation of such an intended reform within the framework of capital's political institutions. The capital system cannot function without the perverse overturning of the relationship between persons and things: capital's alienated and reified powers that dominate the great masses of the people. Similarly, it would be a miracle if the workers who confront capital in the labor process as "isolated

workers" could reacquire mastery over the social productive powers of their labor by some political decree, or even by a whole series of parliamentary reforms enacted under capital's order of social metabolic control. For in these matters there can be no way of avoiding the irreconcilable conflict over the material stakes of *either/or*.

Capital can neither abdicate its—usurped—social productive powers in favor of labor, nor can it *share* them with labor, thanks to some wishful but utterly fictitious "political compromise." For they constitute the overall controlling power of societal reproduction in the form of *"the rule of wealth over society."* Thus it is impossible to escape, in the domain of the fundamental social metabolism, the severe logic of either/or. For either wealth, in the shape of capital, continues to rule over human society, taking it to the brink of self-destruction, or the society of associated producers learns to rule over alienated and reified wealth, with productive powers arising from the *self-determined social labor* of its individual—but no longer *isolated*—members.

Capital is the *extra-parliamentary force par excellence* that cannot possibly be politically constrained by parliament in its power of social metabolic control. This is why the only mode of political representation compatible with capital's mode of functioning is one that *effectively denies* the possibility of contesting its *material power.* And precisely because capital is the extra-parliamentary force par excellence, it has nothing to fear from the reforms that can be enacted within its parliamentary political framework. Since the vital issue on which everything else hinges is that "the *objective conditions of labor* do not appear as subsumed under the worker" but, on the contrary, the worker "appears as subsumed under them," no meaningful change is feasible without addressing this issue both in a form of politics capable of *matching capital's extra-parliamentary powers* and modes of action, and in the domain of *material reproduction*. Thus the only challenge that could sustainably affect the power of capital is one that would simultaneously aim at assuming the system's key productive functions, and at acquiring control over the corresponding political decision-making processes in all spheres, instead of being hopelessly constrained by the circular confinement of institutionally legitimated political action to parliamentary legislation.[190]

There is a great deal of—well-justified—critique of formerly left-wing political figures and of their now fully accommodating parties in the political debates of the last decades. However, what is problematical about such debates is that by overemphasizing the role of personal ambition and failure, they often continue to envisage remedying the situation within the same political institutional framework that greatly favors the criticized "personal betrayals" and the painful "party derailments." Unfortunately, the advocated and hoped-for personnel and government changes tend to reproduce the same deplorable results.

All this should not be very surprising. The reason why the now established political institutions successfully resist significant changes for the better is because they are themselves part of the *problem* and not the *solution*. For in their immanent nature they are the embodiment of the underlying structural determinations and contradictions through which the modern capitalist state—with its ubiquitous network of bureaucratic constituents—has been articulated and stabilized in the course of the last four hundred years.

Naturally, the state was formed not as a one-sided mechanical *result* but through its *necessary reciprocal interrelationship* to the material ground of capital's historical unfolding, as not only being shaped by the latter but also actively shaping it as much as historically feasible under the prevailing—and precisely through that interrelationship also changing—circumstances. Given the insuperably *centrifugal* determination of capital's productive microcosms even at the level of the giant quasi-monopolistic transnational corporations, only the modern state could assume and fulfill the required function of being the overall command structure of the capital system. Inevitably, that meant the complete alienation of the power of overall decision-making from the producers. Even the "particular personifications of capital" were (and are) strictly mandated to act in accord with the structural imperatives of their system. Indeed the modern state, as constituted on the material ground of the capital system, is the *paradigm of alienation* in regard to the powers of comprehensive/totalizing decision-making. It would be therefore extremely naive to imagine that the capitalist state could willingly hand over the alienated powers of systemic decision-making to any rival actor who operates within the legislative framework of parliament.

Thus in order to envisage a meaningful and historically sustainable societal change, it is necessary to submit to a radical critique the material reproductive and the political interdeterminations of the entire system, and not simply some of the contingent and limited political practices. The combined totality of the material reproductive determinations and the all-embracing political command structure of the state together constitute the overpowering reality of the capital system. In this sense, in view of the unavoidable question arising from the challenge of *systemic* determinations, with regard to both socioeconomic reproduction and the state, the need for a comprehensive political transformation—in close conjunction to the meaningful exercise of society's vital productive functions without which far-reaching and lasting political change is inconceivable—becomes inseparable from the problem characterized as the *withering away of the state.* Accordingly, in the historic task of accomplishing "the withering away of the state," *self-management* through full participation and the permanently sustainable overcoming of parliamentarism by a positive form of *substantive decision-making* are inseparable, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter.

This is a vital concern and not a "romantic faithfulness to Marx's unrealizable dream," as some people try to discredit and dismiss it. In truth the "withering away of the state" refers to nothing mysterious or remote but to a perfectly tangible process that must be initiated in our own historical time. It means, in plain language, the *progressive reacquisition of the alienated powers of political decision-making* by the individuals in their enterprise of moving toward a genuine socialist society. Without the reacquisition of these powers—to which not only the capitalist state but also the paralyzing inertia of the *structurally well-entrenched material reproductive practices* are fundamentally opposed—neither the new mode of political control of society as a whole by its individuals is conceivable, nor indeed the *non-adversarial* and thereby *cohesive/plannable* everyday operation of the particular productive and distributive units by the self-managing freely associated producers. Radically superseding *adversariality,* and thereby securing the material and political ground of *globally viable planning*—an absolute must for the very survival of humanity, not to mention the potentially enriched self-realization of its individual members—are synonymous to the *withering away of the state* as an ongoing historical enterprise.

9.7 / OBVIOUSLY, A TRANSFORMATION OF this magnitude cannot be accomplished without the *conscious dedication* of a revolutionary movement to the most challenging historic task of all, capable of being sustained against all adversity, since engaging in it is bound to rouse the fierce hostility of all major forces of the capital system. It is for this reason that the movement in question cannot be simply a type of political party oriented toward securing *parliamentary concessions,* which as a rule turn out to be nullified sooner or later by the extra-parliamentary vested interests of the established order prevailing also in parliament. The socialist movement cannot possibly succeed in the face of the hostility of such forces unless it is rearticulated as a *revolutionary mass movement,* consciously active in *all* forms of political and social struggle: local, country-wide and global/international. A revolutionary mass movement capable of fully utilizing the parliamentary opportunities when available, limited though they might be under the present circumstances, and above all not shirking back from asserting the necessary demands of defiant *extra-perliamentary action.*

The development of this movement is very important for the future of humanity at the present juncture of history. For without a strategically oriented and sustained extra-parliamentary challenge the parties now alternating in government can continue to function as convenient reciprocal alibis for the structurally necessary failure of the system toward labor, thereby effectively confining the role of class opposition to its present position as an inconvenient but *marginalizable afterthought* in capital's parliamentary system. Thus in relation to both the material reproductive and the political

domain, the constitution of a strategically viable socialist extra-parliamentary *mass* movement—in conjunction with the traditional forms of labor's, at present hopelessly derailed, political organizations, which *badly need the radicalizing pressure and support* of such extra-parliamentary forces—is a vital precondition for successfully countering the massive extra-parliamentary power of capital.

The role of a revolutionary extra-parliamentary movement is twofold. On the one hand, it has to formulate and organizationally defend the strategic interests of labor as the historically viable social metabolic alternative. The success of that role is feasible only if the organized forces of labor consciously confront and forcefully negate in practical terms the structural determinations of the established *material reproductive* order as manifest in the capital-relation and in the concomitant subordination of labor in the socioeconomic process, instead of more or less complicitously helping to *restabilize* capital in crisis, as invariably happened at important junctures of the reformist past. At the same time, the open or concealed *political* power of capital that now prevails in parliament needs to be, and can be, challenged—even if now only to a limited degree—through the pressure that *extra-parliamentary forms of action* can exercise on the legislative and the executive.

Extra-parliamentary action can be effective only if it consciously addresses the central aspects and systemic determinations of capital, cutting through the maze of fetishistic appearances through which they dominate society. For the established order materially asserts its power primarily in and through the *capital relation,* perpetuated on the basis of the mystifying *inversion* of the actual productive relationship of the hegemonic alternative classes in capitalist society. As mentioned already, this inversion enables capital to usurp the role of *producer* who, in Marx's words *"employs labor,"* thanks to the baffling *"personification of things and the reification of persons,"* and thereby legitimates itself as the inalterable precondition for realizing the "interest of all." Since the concept of the "interest of all" really matters, even if it is now fraudulently used to camouflage the total denial of its substance to the overwhelming majority of the people by the formal/legal pretenses of "justice and equality," there can be no meaningful and historically sustainable alternative to the established social order without radically overcoming the all-embracing capital relation itself. This is a non-postponable *systemic* demand. *Partial demands* can be and should be advocated by socialists if they have a direct or indirect bearing on the absolutely fundamental demand for overcoming the capital relation itself, which goes to the heart of the matter.

This demand is in sharp contrast to what is now allowed to the forces of opposition by capital's faithful ideologists and political figures. Their major criterion for ruling out the possibility of even the important partial demands of labor is precisely

whether they have a potential for negatively affecting the stability of the system. Thus, for instance, even local "politically motivated industrial action" is categorically excluded (even outlawed) "in a democratic society," because its pursuit might have negative implications for the normal functioning of the system. The role of *reformist parties,* by contrast, is welcome, because their demands help to restabilize the system in difficult times—through wage-restricting industrial intervention (with the slogan of the "necessity of tightening the belt") and trade-union-curbing political/legislative agreements. Thus their demands contribute to the dynamics of renewed capital expansion, or are at least "neutral" in the sense that at some point in the future, even if not at the moment of their first formulation, they can be integrated into the stipulated framework of normality.

The revolutionary negation of the capital system is conceivable only through a strategically sustained and conscious organizational intervention. While the tendentiously one-sided dismissal of "spontaneity" by sectarian presumption must be treated with the criticism it deserves, it is no less harmful to underrate the importance of *revolutionary consciousness* and the *organizational requirements* of its success. The historical failure of some major parties of the Third International, which once professed Leninist and revolutionary aims, like the Italian and the French Communist parties mentioned above, should not divert our attention from the importance of *recreating on a much more secure ground the political organizations* through which the vital socialist transformation of our societies can be accomplished in the future. Evidently, a forceful critical assessment of what went wrong so far is an important part of this process of renewal. What is amply clear right now is that the *disintegrative descent* of such parties on the slippery slope of *parliamentary entrapment* offers an important lesson for the future.

Only two comprehensive modes of social metabolic control are feasible today: capital's class exploitative reproductive order—imposed at all cost by the "personifications of capital"—which miserably failed humanity, pushing it in our time to the brink of self-destruction. And the other order, diametrically opposed to the established one: the social metabolic *hegemonic alternative* of labor. A society managed by the social individuals on the basis of *substantive equality,* which enables them to develop their productive human and intellectual potentialities to the full, in harmony with the metabolic requirements of nature, instead of being bent on the destruction of nature and thereby also of themselves, as capital's mode of uncontrollable social metabolic control is busy doing right now. This is why under the present conditions of capital's structural crisis nothing short of the *comprehensive hegemonic alternative* to capital's rule—spelled out as the dialectical complementarity of particular but *non-marginalizable immediate demands* and the *comprehensive objectives of systemic*

transformation—can constitute the valid program of the *conscious revolutionary organized movement* all over the world.

The crisis of our social order has never been greater than it is today. Its solution is inconceivable without the sustained intervention of revolutionary politics on an appropriate scale. The ruling order cannot manage its affairs under the conditions of its deepening structural crisis without adopting ever more repressive authoritarian measures against the forces opposed to the ongoing destructive trends of development and without the engagement of its dominant imperialist powers, by now even in genocidal military adventures. It would be the greatest of illusions to imagine that a socioeconomic and political order of this kind is reformable in the interest of labor when it firmly resisted the institution of all significant change advocated by the reformist movement throughout its long history. For now the margin of accommodatory adjustments is getting narrower in view of the uncontrollable global interrelationship of capital's contradictions and antagonisms. Thus

> in view of the fact that the most intractable of the global capital system's contradictions is the one between the *internal unrestrainability* of its economic constituents and the now inescapable *necessity of introducing major restraints,* any hope for finding a way out of this vicious circle under the circumstances marked by the activation of capital's absolute limits must be vested in the *political dimension* of the system. Thus in the light of recent legislative measures which already point in this direction, there can be no doubt that the full power of the state will be activated to serve the end of squaring capital's vicious circle, even if it means subjecting all potential dissent to *extreme authoritarian constraints*. Equally, there can be no doubt that whether or not such a "remedial action" (in conformity to the global capital system's structural limits) will be successfully pursued, despite its obvious *authoritarian character and destructiveness,* will depend on the working class's ability or failure to *radically reartículate the socialist movement as a truly international enterprise*.[191]

Without the adoption of a viable socialist international perspective the labor movement cannot acquire its required strength. In this respect the critical reassessment of the history of the past Internationals is no less important than the radical critique of the "parliamentary road to socialism." In fact the unfulfilled promises of these two strategic approaches are closely connected. In the past the failure to realize the necessary conditions of success in one of them deeply affected the prospects of the other, and vice versa. On the one hand, without a strong self-assertive international socialist movement there was no chance of making the socialist perspective

prevail in the national parliaments. At the same time, the overwhelming dominance of capital in the national setting, and the ensuing accommodation of internationally most inadequately organized labor to the given parliamentary constraints and to the nationalistic temptations (clamorously highlighted by the capitulation of the social-democratic parties to their national bourgeoisie at the outbreak of the First World War), there could be no question of turning the radical Internationals into a cohesive and strategically effective organized force.

Thus the unhappy history of the radical Internationals was by no means accidental. It was connected with their unrealistic assumption of the necessity of a *doctrinal unity* while operating within a political framework that imposed on the overwhelming majority of the labor movement the need for parliamentary accommodation. Indeed, it is not inaccurate to say that the pursuit of the two strategic lines of approach alongside each other was in the past mutually exclusive. Accordingly, the necessary change in the future is not feasible without critically addressing the problems of both. Only a conscious and consistently pursued revolutionary movement of labor—asserting itself as the hegemonic alternative to capital's social order—can find a way out of these difficulties.

To be sure, the conscious organized revolutionary movement of labor cannot be contained within the restrictive political framework of parliament dominated by the extra-parliamentary power of capital. Nor can it succeed as a self-oriented sectarian organization. It can successfully define itself through two vital orienting principles: first, the elaboration of *its own extra-parliamentary program* oriented toward the comprehensive hegemonic alternative objectives to secure a fundamental systemic transformation; and second, equally important in strategic organizational terms, its active involvement in the constitution of the necessary *extra-parliamentary mass movement,* as the carrier of the revolutionary alternative capable of changing also the legislative process in a qualitative way. This would represent a major step in the direction of the withering away of the state. Only through these organizational developments directly involving also the great masses of the people can one envisage the realization of the historic task of instituting labor's hegemonic alternative, in the interest of all-embracing socialist emancipation.

10. Reflections on the New International

Dedicated to the memory and legacy of President Hugo Chávez

10.1 / THE NEED FOR THE establishment and successful operation of the *New International* is painfully obvious and urgent today.[192] The enemies of a historically sustainable societal reproductive order, who still occupy at the present time the dominant position in our increasingly endangered world, do not hesitate for a moment to exploit in the interest of their destructive design, with utmost cynicism and hypocrisy, the existing decision-making and opinion-forming organs of the international community, from the Security Council of the United Nations to the great multiplicity of the national and international press and to the other mass media under their direct material stranglehold. This has been repeatedly underlined by the methods with which they justify their unlawful wars in the Middle East and elsewhere, with a vast network of international bodies and organizational resources at their disposal. At the same time the adherents of the much needed socialist alternative are fragmented and divided among themselves, instead of internationally combining their strength for the cause of a successful confrontation with their adversaries.

In reality the enemies of socialism are attempting to *recolonize the world* in the name of their preposterous inhuman ideology, which targets even with the most violent means the countries of the so-called *axis of evil,* in former U.S. president George W. Bush's belligerent rhetoric—not shirking from the open advocacy of "*liberal imperialism*" (in the words of Robert Cooper, British Labour prime minister Tony Blair's "guru" and high-ranking diplomat, subsequently special adviser to the EU's Foreign Affairs Chief, Xavier Solana).

This is how one of the most influential British Sunday newspapers, *The Observer*, introduces Cooper, the author of an aggressive and highly publicized war-mongering propaganda manifesto:

> Senior British Diplomat Robert Cooper helped to shape British Prime Minister Tony Blair's calls for a *new internationalism* and a new doctrine of *humanitarian intervention* which would place *limits on state sovereignty*. Cooper's call for a new *liberal imperialism* and admission of the need for *double standard in foreign policy* have outraged the left but the essay [popularized by *The Observer*] offers a rare and candid unofficial insight into the thinking behind British strategy on Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond.[193]

Cooper's article offers a characteristic ideological rationalization not only of the pernicious "thinking behind British strategy on Afghanistan and Iraq" but also about the thinking at the roots of overwhelmingly dominant global hegemonic US imperialism that recklessly plays with fire—potentially even with nuclear fire. Here are the main points of Robert Cooper's appallingly pretentious jargon-regurgitating article which—on account of its arrogant advocacy of "the need for colonialism" and for a "sovereignty-limiting humanitarian intervention" by renewed imperialist "internationalism"—must be tellingly propagandized and promoted with reverence in the bourgeois press:

> While the members of the *postmodern* world may not represent a danger to one another, both the modern and the pre-modern zones pose threats. The challenge to the postmodern world is to get used to the idea of *double standards.* Among ourselves, we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states *outside the postmodern continent of Europe*, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era—*force, pre-emptive attack, deception*, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the nineteenth-century world of every state for itself. Among ourselves, we keep the law, but when we operate in the jungle, we must also *use the laws of the jungle*. The challenge posed by the *pre-modern world* is a new one. The pre-modern world is a *world of failed states*. . . . It is precisely because of the *death of imperialism* that we are seeing the emergence of the pre-modern world. *Empire and imperialism* are words that have become a form of abuse in the postmodern world. Today, there are no colonial powers willing to take on the job, though the opportunities, perhaps even *the need for colonization*, is as great as it ever was in the nineteenth century. All

> the conditions for imperialism are there, but both the supply and demand for imperialism have dried up. And yet *the weak still need the strong* and the strong still need an *orderly world*. A world in which the *efficient* and well governed *export stability and liberty*, and which is open for investment and growth—all of this seems eminently desirable. What is needed then is a *new kind of imperialism*, one acceptable to a world of *human rights and cosmopolitan values*.[194]

The fact that the intellectual standard of such "strategic thinking" is at the level of a charlatan's feverish projections makes absolutely no difference to its eager propagandists. For the pernicious interests of aggressive imperialist domination must elevate all self-proclaimed "visions" of this kind (boastingly named a "real vision" by its author) to the height of universally commended "democratic" wisdom. At the same time the hostile propaganda tenets advocated in them must be declared to constitute the unchallengeable manifestation of "*human rights and cosmopolitan values*." This is just like former president Bill Clinton's grotesque but equally aggressive decree that arrogantly proclaimed that "there is only *one necessary nation*, the United States of America."

Understandably, of course, the same naked imperialist spirit was embodied in then-U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage's crudely voiced threat, as reported (in a live television interview broadcast in Washington in 2006) by none other than Pakistan's head of state at the time, General Musharraf, who received the threat. According to Armitage, Pakistan would be "*bombed back to the Stone Age*" (no doubt through the good services of the required destructive power of nuclear weapons) unless Musharraf's government fully obeyed the orders of the United States in relation to the ongoing war in Afghanistan.

In the same way, another high-ranking "strategic thinker" of the US administration, Thomas Barnett—the Senior Strategic Researcher at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island—pontificates in his book, in the words of one insightful reviewer:

> Strategic vision in the United States needs to focus on "growing the number of states that recognize a stable set of rules regarding war and peace." . . . The United States, he thinks, has a responsibility to use its tremendous power to make globalization truly global. Otherwise portions of humanity will be condemned to an outsider status that will eventually *define them as enemies*. And once the United States has named these enemies, it will invariably *wage war on them, unleashing death and destruction*. . . . This is not *forced assimilation*, Barnett claims, nor the extension of empire; instead it is the *expansion of freedom*.[195]

Moreover, the brutal implications of this "freedom-extending strategic vision" are spelled out in this openly cynical and aggressive way in an article written by the same Thomas Barnett to *Esquire* magazine: "What does this new approach mean for this nation and the world over the long run? Let me be very clear about this: The boys are *never* coming home. America is not leaving the Middle East until the Middle East joins the world. It's that simple. *No exit* means, *no exit strategy*."[196]

Naturally, it is totally irrelevant with regard to the customary cynicism and hypocrisy with which the justifications of war and of actual war crimes are served up for public consumption, which one of the two political parties forms the government in the United States at the time. The presidents and presidential candidates as a rule solemnly declare, in righteously claimed conformity to international law, that in their war enterprises there could not be any question of pressing for "*regime change*," while knowing only too well that precisely regime change—in the interest of the global hegemonic imperialism of their state—is the true objective of their constantly renewed war adventures.

A blatantly obvious example in this respect was the case of Democratic presidential candidate and former vice president Al Gore who assured his electoral audience in 2002, with unctuous hypocrisy, that he supported without any reservation the planned war against Iraq because such a war would not mean "regime change" but only "disarming a regime which possessed weapons of mass destruction." The pretended "weapons of mass destruction," as we all know, did not exist in Iraq, but the cynically denied objective of "regime change" was ruthlessly asserted by the war waged on that country, causing the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

No one should be surprised, therefore, that the same utterly cynical and hypocritical policies are being forced upon international decision-making bodies in our own days by Western presidents and prime ministers just as the ones painfully witnessed in the past. The deceitfully justified war against Libya is an obvious example in this respect. The presidents and prime ministers of the Western "democracies" seem to presume, fully in tune with their cynically proclaimed "*double standard in foreign policy*," that they can always impose on the population of their countries and on the rest of the world the now experienced degradation of international law and politics in virtue of their present-day domination of the established power relations and the corresponding organs of international decision-making and public opinion.

10.2 / TO BE SURE, IN this way the enemies of socialism—who imperil with their reckless war adventures the survival of humanity on our planet—are trying to nullify all historical progress that has been accomplished up to the present time. They do this in order to perpetuate their so-called *liberal imperialism* and the total domination of

the militarily less powerful countries by unleashing death and destruction. And they are bent on pursuing such aims not even in the form of the earlier threatened *preventive* strikes but by means of the now openly advocated totally arbitrary *pre-emptive* strikes, intended to be waged against whoever they may please to attack in the name of "*human rights and cosmopolitan values*" and the pretended "*expansion of democracy and freedom*" installed by their "*humanitarian interventions*."

This is a blatant attempt to *reverse* the course of historical development in the last century which demonstrated the contradictory nature and the destructive untenability of monopolistic imperialist capital expansion on our planet stretched to its limits, undermining thereby even the most elementary conditions of our ecological survival by the criminally wasteful utilization of the world's material and human resources and by the wanton destruction of nature itself. Moreover, whereas in earlier stages of capitalist development the established reproductive order could reconstitute its operational normality through its *conjunctural crises* and the associated periodic liquidation of unprofitable capital, in the last four to five decades of its development the now incorrigibly wasteful capital system had sunk into its ever deepening *structural crisis*.

Thus the increasing destructiveness we witness everywhere is by no means some passing historical coincidence, nor is it the corrigible aberration of some misguided policymakers and their "visionary advisers." On the contrary, it is the fateful corollary of our time, irrepressibly arising from the deep-seated structural crisis of our historically untenable societal reproductive order.

This is why the economic and political personifications of the capital system must resort to imposing ever-greater devastation both in the domain of material life—in the destructively productive economy and in the adventurist/fraudulent world of finance, as well as by exploiting to the point of no return the planet's vital natural resources and by irresponsibly exterminating countless living species needed for maintaining the necessary ecological balance of nature—together with the catastrophically wasteful military field; and doing all that in the vain hope of resolving (or at least indefinitely keeping under their control) the structural crisis of the established system.

However, the sobering truth of the matter is that the only feasible way of successfully resolving in a durable way the extended structural crisis of our dangerous productive order is the institution and the historically sustainable operation of a *radically different societal reproductive order.* For once an all-embracing productive system reaches the limits of its *structurally determined historical viability,* clearly demonstrated by its increasing wastefulness and destructiveness on all planes of societal interchange, as evidenced by "globalized capital," there can be no other way of overcoming the potentially all-destructive structural determinations of such a system than the adoption of

a *fundamentally different structure* of social metabolic reproduction. For the innermost structural crisis of a comprehensive societal reproductive order inevitably calls for the institution of an appropriate *structural change*.

During the long *ascending phase* of capital's historical development, the necessary process of capital expansion and accumulation could be carried on relatively undisturbed. This state of affairs started to change significantly with the onset of the system's *descending phase* of development in Europe, a couple of decades before the middle of the nineteenth century. At that time capital's hegemonic antagonist, labor, appeared on the historical stage with its own demands as the active subject of a qualitatively different alternative order of social metabolic reproduction, and began to assert its claims in the form of organized action.

The early formation and organization of this movement coincided with the eruption of a major economic and social crisis and the ensuing revolutionary upheavals in the 1840s in different parts of Europe. This process was necessarily associated with a vital *international* articulation of labor's demands for the establishment of a hegemonic alternative social reproductive order from that time onward, as clearly spelled out in the *Communist Manifesto,* written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels at the request of their comrades from the Communist League, founded in 1847. The structurally entrenched reproductive order of capital, tending irresistibly toward its global extension and integration, could only be successfully overcome through the likewise globally self-assertive hegemonic alternative of labor's "new historic form." As the young Marx and Engels characterized the increasingly more serious crises of their time in the *Communist Manifesto*:

> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. . . . In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, *universal interdependence of nations*. . . . Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. . . . The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the

> bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand by *enforced destruction* of a mass of productive forces; on the other by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for *more extensive and more destructive crises*, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.[197]

However, the Communist League for which this truly visionary manifesto was written could not survive very long. Due to the vicious persecution and imprisonment of its organizationally weak adherents in Germany, it had to be dissolved by the remaining members in 1852, five years after its foundation. Understandably, it became obvious that only a powerful international organization of the working class could stand its ground against the onslaught of the ruling order, which was to be expected in the future, as well. Thus the need for an organizationally sustainable constitution and for the corresponding combative strategic orientation of such an international movement appeared on the historical agenda in the early 1850s and remained ever since that time the unavoidable challenge to successive generations of capital's hegemonic antagonist.

10.3 / NATURALLY, THE "*MORE EXTENSIVE and more destructive crises*" anticipated in the *Communist Manifesto* continued to assert themselves in the capitalistically most developed parts of Europe, including France and England. Accordingly, there was a great temptation to generalize about the chances of a revolutionary transformation on that basis. Indeed, even some of Marx's own utterances in the midst of the unfolding financial crises in the second half of the 1850s pointed in that direction.

However, as a self-critical reassessment of the prospects of longer-term historical development we can read these words in one of Marx's seminally important letters to Engels:

> The historic task of bourgeois society is the establishment of the *world market*, at least in its basic outlines, and a mode of production that rests on its basis. Since the world is round, it seems that this has been accomplished with the colonization of California and Australia and with the annexation of China and Japan. For us the difficult question is this: the revolution on the [European] Continent is imminent and its character will be at once socialist; will it not be *necessarily crushed in this little corner of the world*, since on a much larger terrain the development of bourgeois society is still *in the ascendant*.[198]

In this soberingly critical spirit, two fundamental questions had to be clearly defined in relation to the strategic orientation of the emancipatory movement of the working class: a movement which in the light of painful historical experience of its recent past (suffered through the defeat of the Communist League) had to be reconstituted on the broadest possible basis compatible with its vitally necessary combative character.

The first question in this respect was the uncompromising *overall objective* of the organized socialist movement itself, envisaging the *radical overcoming of capital's reproductive system* in its *entirety*, in openly pursued contrast to the spontaneous trade unionist tendency of—to be sure against all sectarian maximalism thoroughly legitimate but far from exclusive—concern with wage improvements only. This point was forcefully underlined in an important speech delivered by Marx in 1865 before a working-class audience of the recently established International Working Men's Association in these terms:

> Trade unions work well as centers of *resistance* against the encroachment of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a *guerilla war* against the *effects* of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the *final emancipation* of the working class, that is to say, the *ultimate abolition of the wages system*.[199]

In this sense the first and overall strategic objective of the organized *mass* movement had to be the institution of a radical *structural change* in the established mode of societal reproduction *as a whole*. This had to be achieved not simply through the more or less temporary and potentially divisive improvement in the material and cultural conditions of existence of the members of the working class in some *particular* countries or regions, which could only be a struggle against the *effects* of capital's encroachment on the workers' standard of living while leaving their necessary *causal foundations* untouched in their place.

The second fundamental strategic principle was equally important, concerning the necessity of a *fully international* orientation and solidarity of the envisaged organizational framework itself. The lasting success of the emancipatory objectives to be pursued—defined as the "ultimate abolition of the wages system" over against the globally unfolding power of capital—really depended on labor's ability to match through its own consciously coordinated militant international action the might of its class adversary everywhere. Otherwise the partial successes obtained in some limited areas could be sooner or later reversed and even nullified by the power of international capital tending toward its global extension and integration.

The International Working Men's Association—a body that became known in working-class history as the First International—was founded in 1864 in the spirit of these closely interconnected fundamental strategic objectives. This organization successfully maintained its existence—in comparison to the relatively short-lived and far less influential Communist League—for an entire decade. However, the continuing historical ascendancy of capital on that "much larger terrain," as underlined by Marx in his earlier quoted letter to Engels, militated also against this much broader international organization of the workers. In fact, as foreshadowed by the Marxian warning, the revolution of the 1871 Paris Commune was "*crushed in the European little corner of the world*," repressed in blood by the brutal class forces of the ruling order which made it thereby absolutely clear that all attempts at a revolutionary transformation of society must expect the same savagery of response as the supporters of the Commune had to undergo in France.

This dimension of the *international relation of forces* between the worldwide imperialistically favored continuing ascendancy of capital and the greatly disadvantaged organization of labor was one of the principal reasons why the absolutely necessary international strategic orientation of the labor movement had to suffer a major historical defeat with the demise of the First International. This turn of events against the advancement of the international working-class movement was all the more problematical in view of the fact that in general historical terms the capital system toward the middle of the nineteenth century had already entered the *descending phase* of its development as a *productive system*.

In its *ascending* phase the capital system was successfully asserting its productive accomplishments on the basis of its *internal expansionary dynamism*, as yet without the imperative of a *monopolistic/imperialist drive* of the capitalistically most advanced countries for militarily secured world domination. Yet, through the historically irreversible circumstance of entering the productively descending phase, the capital system had become inseparable from an ever-intensifying need for the *militaristic/monopolistic* extension and overstretch of its structural framework, tending in due course on the internal productive plane toward the establishment and the criminally wasteful operation of a *permanent arms industry*, together with the wars necessarily associated with it.

In fact, well before the outbreak of the First World War Rosa Luxemburg clearly identified the nature of this fateful *monopolistic/imperialist* development on the destructively productive plane by writing in her book on *The Accumulation of Capital* about the role of massive militarist production: "Capital itself ultimately controls this automatic and rhythmic movement of militarist production through the legislature and a press whose function is to mold so-called 'public opinion.' That

is why this particular province of capitalist accumulation at first seems capable of infinite expansion."[200]

In another respect, the increasingly wasteful utilization of energy and vital material strategic resources carried with it not only the ever more *destructive articulation* of capital's self-assertive structural determinations on the *military* plane—by legislatively manipulated "public opinion" never even questioned, let alone properly regulated—but also with regard to the increasingly *destructive encroachment of capital expansion on nature*. Ironically but by no means surprisingly, this turn of regressive historical development of the capital system as such also carried with it some bitterly negative consequences for the international organization of labor.

Indeed, this new articulation of the capital system in the last third of the nineteenth century, with its *monopolistic imperialist* phase inseparable from its fully extended global ascendancy, opened up a new modality of (most antagonistic and ultimately untenable) expansionary dynamism to the overwhelming benefit of a mere handful of privileged imperialist countries, postponing thereby the "moment of truth" that goes with the system's irrepressible *structural crisis* in our own time. This type of monopolistic imperialist development inevitably gave a major boost to the possibility of militaristic capital expansion and accumulation, no matter how great a price had to be paid in due course for the ever-intensifying destructiveness of the new expansionary dynamism. Indeed, the militarily underpinned monopolistic dynamism had to assume the form of even two devastating *global wars*—as well as in the second half of the twentieth century the threat of total annihilation of humankind implicit in a potential *Third World War*, together with the ongoing perilous destruction of nature that became evident and, even by the worst apologists, undeniable.

But returning to the development of labor at the time of the First International, the second major historical factor that carried with it a great disadvantage to the originally envisaged constitution of capital's historical antagonist as an *international mass movement*—with its temptations and illusions set against the combative socialist solidarity essential among the movement's national constituents—was the emergence in a few of the most successful monopolist imperialist countries of the electorally more influential working-class political parties.

The most painful and revealing documentary evidence in this respect is Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* which prophetically anticipated the deeply negative consequences arising from the opportunistic reorientation of the German social-democratic movement at the time of the unification of the left-wing "Eisenachers" and the worse than accommodationist "Lassallean" social democrats. For the Lassalleans, as intimated by Marx's words of suspicion voiced at an earlier stage, were "probably in secret understanding with Bismarck," the imperialist "Iron Chancellor" of Germany.[201] This unholy

"understanding" was in fact revealed half a century later by the gravely indicting evidence of Lassalle's correspondence with Bismarck, published later, in 1928.

As it transpired through this correspondence, Lassalle sent to Bismarck the statutes of the General Association of the German Workers—an organization he secretly manipulated—and added to them these treacherous comments:

> The Statutes will clearly convince you how true it is that the working class feels an *instinctive inclination toward a dictatorship*—if it can first be rightly persuaded that the dictatorship will be exercised in its interest. And [they will show] how much, despite all republican views—or rather precisely because of them—the working class would therefore be inclined, as I told you only recently, to look upon the Crown, in opposition to the egoism of bourgeois society, as the *natural representative of the social dictatorship*. That is, if the Crown for its part could ever make up its mind to take the—certainly very improbable—step of striking out a really revolutionary line and transmitting itself from the monarchy of the privileged orders into a social and revolutionary people's monarchy.[202]

Without actually knowing anything tangible about this secret design by Lassalle for selling out social-democratic labor to the (imperialistically aspiring and acting, hence working-class support-seeking) class enemy's dictatorship—readily endorsed and even idealized by Lassalle—Marx nonetheless treated the maneuver of social-democratic unification with the greatest suspicion. His devastating *Critique of the Gotha Program*—which for internal party reasons had to be kept under lock and key by the unified party's leadership for sixteen years, and was only published long after Marx's death as a result of Engels's outspoken insistence—indicated in the clearest possible way the fateful character of the illusory electoral blind alley embarked upon by the social-democratic movement in the late 1870s. Engels also pointed out at the time of the acrimonious dispute over the Gotha Program, in his 1875 correspondence with August Bebel, that the opportunistic unification of the two wings of the future social-democratic party carried with it the far-reaching implication according to which "the principle that the workers' movement is an *international movement* is, to all intents and purposes, *completely disavowed*."[203]

The clamorous confirmation of this justifiably damning diagnosis by Marx and Engels was tragically supplied by German social democracy itself at the outbreak of the First World War when the party sided without any reservation with the disastrous imperialist adventure of the country. Moreover, despite all of the subsequently unfolding historical developments, including the collapse of the social-democratic

Weimar Republic and the catastrophic revanchism of Hitler's movement—electorally supported by the majority of the German population—which dragged Germany into an even more destructive world war, social democracy could never extricate itself from its nationalist integument, thereby imposing its own shackles on the international working-class movement under its continued electoral influence.

10.4 / IN THIS WAY THE early attempts aimed at the establishment of a combative international organization of labor ended in grave historical disappointment.

The internal troubles of the First International—despite that it was still under the tirelessly dedicated intellectual and political leadership of Marx—became increasingly more pronounced in the last few years of the 1860s. As a result, by 1872 Marx was forced to transfer its organizing center to New York, in the soon-to-be-disappointed hope of preserving its firm international orientation and bare existence.

However, the disorienting centrifugal force of the national movements and the increasingly more imperialist-inclined capitalist nation-states to which the particular organizations were linked proved to be far too much to withstand in the end. This trend was of course grievously affected by the brutal military repression of the Paris Commune in 1871 to which Chancellor Otto von Bismarck directly contributed in the most vicious way. In the midst of the Commune's struggle for survival he released French prisoners of war captured by his army to fight against the Communards, thereby providing a devastating material, political, and military proof of *bourgeois class solidarity*. Nor did he stop there. Indeed during the years of 1871–72 Chancellor Bismarck was working on the establishment of an international framework of action against the revolutionary movement of the working class. In October 1873 his efforts were successfully implemented through the formation of the Three Emperors' League of Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary, with the unifying conscious aim of taking *common action* in the event of a "European disturbance" caused by the working class in any particular country. This is how Bismarck "realized" Lassalle's treacherous plan about a "military dictatorship to be instituted and exercised in the interest of the working class," in conjunction with the monarchy as the projected "natural representative of the social dictatorship."

Not surprisingly, therefore, the First International disintegrated as a result of the intensifying pressures and contradictions that prevailed among its constituent parts, to a large extent thanks to the significant boost received by capital in the last third of the nineteenth century through the opening up of its monopolist/imperialist phase of development. Sadly, in that sense, the experience of the First International, despite the heroic dedication of its combative supporters, proved to be in historical terms premature under the conditions when in the greater part of the world the development

of bourgeois society was still in the ascendant. This circumstance helped to overcome the major financial crises of the 1850s and 1860s, redefining the relation of forces for a rather long historical period in favor of perversely expansionary capital, irrespective of how problematical—in view of its subsequent global wars and destructive encroachment on nature much worse than problematical—such ascendancy had to turn out to be.

Naturally, the social-democratic Second International that later emerged from the unification of the Eisenachers and the Lassalleans could not even remotely approach the once envisaged ideal of a combative international organization of the working class. Moreover, it demonstrated the fateful inadequacy of that organization for the hoped-for assertion of labor's hegemonic alternative to capital right at the outbreak of the First World War through its total capitulation to the imperialistic class interests of the ruling order.

In light of this bitter experience of the Second International's capitulatory implosion the Third International was constituted under Lenin's guidance after the First World War, and for a while it promised the radical strategic reorientation of the international socialist movement. However, not very long after Lenin's death the hope attached to the Third International was also totally disappointed, in that this organization was transformed into a pliable instrument of Stalinist state policies and as a result had to be dissolved in due course. Nor could the Fourth International successfully remedy the situation. It proved to be unable to live up to the original Marxian design of constituting a combative *mass movement* of the international working class, despite the expectations of its founder and supporters. Fragmentation and division often seemed to prevail in radical political organizations, badly militating against the hope of growing influence. In regard to the parties once associated with the Third International, the sad historical fact is that precisely some of the biggest of them in the Western capitalist countries—like the Italian and the French Communist Parties—transformed themselves within the accommodationist framework of the parliamentary system into neoliberal-type political formations, and thereby into pillars of the established order.

10.5 / TODAY THE CONDITIONS ARE very different not only in a *negative* sense, indicating the intensification of the dangers for human survival both on the military and on the ecological plane, but in a far from negligible way also for the *better*.

To be sure, the earlier underlined *destructiveness* experienced today—manifest both through the never ending wars of global hegemonic imperialism (idealized by its "visionary" apologists by saying that "*the boys are never coming home*," because we need the "*new imperialism of human rights and cosmopolitan values*," while their war criminal political leaders reward themselves with the Nobel Peace Prize) and through the wanton

destruction of nature—represent a potentially much more acute danger than ever seen before in human history. And of course they call for a necessary combative response by a historically sustainable *mass* movement. At the same time, the capital system's traditional *postponement* of the "moment of truth"—by exporting its problems and contradictions to the terrain of its formerly available ascendancy in that "much greater part of the world than the European little corner"—had also run its historic course. Not simply in the sense that *destructiveness* itself never solved—and never can or could solve—anything on its own. Above all, this is because every conceivable productive system, even the most powerful one ever known in human history, the once irresistible *capital system,* has its historically untranscendable *structural limits*.

The "*little corner"* of the world of which Marx spoke in 1858 is no longer a little corner. Under the existing conditions the severe problems of the capital system's increasing saturation and *destructive overreach* of itself continue to cast their darkest possible shadow everywhere. For capital's historical ascendancy is by now fully consummated on that "much larger terrain" whose disconcerting existence Marx had to acknowledge in his letter of 1858 to Engels.

Moreover, under the new historical circumstances economic crises, too, unfold in a very different way. At the time of capital's global ascendancy, crises erupted with cyclic regularity in the form of "great thunderstorms" (in Marx's words), followed by relatively long cyclic *expansionary phases*. In great contrast the radically new pattern today, with the end of the age of capital's historical ascendancy, is the growing frequency of *recessionary phases* tending toward a *depressed continuum*. And given the globally intertwined character of the self-assertive capital system, only through organizationally sustained combative action can the destructive forces of capital as an increasingly wasteful reproductive order be defeated, as against the *defensiveness* that used to characterize the socialist movement in the past.

In this respect the constitution and successful operation of the *New International* is not only painfully obvious but also most urgent today. Indeed, the positive prospect in relation to this task is that for the first time ever in history the combative international movement of the working class—capital's only feasible hegemonic alternative—can be realized. For some major sociopolitical factors, which in the past significantly contributed to capital's positional strength and tended to force labor into a *defensive posture,* have been blocked in our time, hindering thereby capital's formerly practicable exit from its crisis today.

It is important to remember here that the earlier mentioned "*encroachment by capital*" stressed by Marx in his address to the General Council of the International Working Men's Association concerned the issue of the workers' standard of living, with its twofold competitiveness directly affecting labor. In the first sense, this

competitiveness meant labor's confrontation with capital for the distribution of the social product, offering against labor the obvious advantage to capital as the controller of the means and conditions of production. At the same time, in the second sense, the individual workers as well as the various sections of labor had to be involved in a competitive struggle among themselves for securing their economic conditions of existence, resulting again in the disadvantage of the working class through its internal divisions and corresponding sectional orientation, tending to undermine thereby its strategic overall interests. This is why Marx contrasted with the traditionally pursued action against capital's encroachment over the distribution of the capitalistically attainable social product—a type of action necessarily confined by competitively divided labor to defensively questioning only the *effects* of the system but not its structurally determined *causal foundation*—the need for the adoption of a strategy by labor for "using its organized forces as a *lever* for the *final emancipation* of the working class, that is to say, the *ultimate abolition of the wages system*."

As we all know, *none* of the four internationals of the working-class movement could realize the Marxian strategy for overcoming, through a sustained offensive, the causal framework of the system under the prevailing historical circumstances. At best the radical wing of the movement could include some of the relevant *aims* in its *manifestos*, but could not *realize such aims* under the historically favored structural dominance of the capital system itself in the course of its historical ascendancy. Moreover, the *reformist* wing of the international working-class movement always kept the demands directed against the *effects* of capital's encroachments on the workers' standard of living and bargaining power *well within* the system's manageable limits, *helping* on the whole capital's exit from its cyclic crises instead of making the slightest attempts for the realization of "*evolutionary socialism*," as explicitly but rather disingenuously promised by Eduard Bernstein and his soulmates among social-democratic and traditional (not to mention "New") labor. Nor should anyone forget that in the end even the tamest possible tenets of "reform" for the realization of "evolutionary socialism" have been completely abandoned.

In this respect, the historic change in our time is the *blocking* of the road to the continued adoption of the *reformist fiction* promising the realization of a structurally different socialist order of society through some minute economic changes. In complete contrast, capital in the past could induce reformist labor to *internalize* and actively promote the totally unrealizable promise of "evolutionary socialism"—and its twin brother, the so-called Italian and French parliamentary road to socialism—and thereby it could mystify and successfully disarm its potential working-class adversary. In view of this mystifying correlation between fictional reformist promise and the brutally sobering reality of "evolutionary socialism" and the "parliamentary road to

socialism," it is by no means surprising that the formerly most successful Western parties of the Third International—the Italian and the French Communist parties—ended their road the way in which they actually did, entrapping themselves in a regressive position indistinguishable from neoliberalism. Inevitably, the painfully experienced regressive "reformist" development of the labor movement reopened the question of what course of action must be followed in the future in order to oppose in a strategically sustainable way the worsening conditions of life of workers in the capitalistically most advanced countries, no matter how long it might take to rectify the defeatist past. In our time even the realization of the most limited demands and objectives raised by the representatives of the working class require engagement in organizationally effective radical forms of combative action, directed at the capital regime's structural control of the core of the wages system itself.

The second blocked avenue for capital, now in its deepening structural crisis, is potentially even more serious. It concerns the removal of the traditional feasibility of solving the capital system's aggravating problems through an *all-out war*, in conformity to the way in which it was in fact *twice* attempted in the course of the *world wars* of the twentieth century. Nothing can unblock this fateful avenue, not even the most irrational adventurism advocated by capital's war-mongering "visionary" apologists. For the underlying issue is an insoluble contradiction within the reproductive framework of the capital system as such.

This is a contradiction manifest, on the one hand, through the ongoing relentless *concentration and centralization of capital on a global scale*, and on the other, through the structurally imposed inability of the established system to produce the required *political stabilization on a corresponding global scale*. Even the most aggressive military interventions of global hegemonic imperialism—at present those of the United States—in different parts of the planet are bound to fail in this respect. The destructiveness of limited wars, no matter how many, is very far from being enough for imposing everywhere on a lasting basis the unchallengeable rule of a *single imperialist hegemon* and its "*global government*"—the only thing that would befit the logic of capital today. Only the socialist hegemonic alternative can show a way out of this destructive contradiction. That is, an organizationally viable historic alternative that fully respects the dialectical complementarity of the national and the international in our own historical time.

Thus the question of capital's self-assertive encroachment itself has been radically changed under the present circumstances in its objective terms of reference. For now, due to the irreversible consummation of the capital system's historical ascendancy, with no more terrains remaining to invade and subdue on our limited planet, the capital system's self-expansionary imperative of encroachment directly threatens with

destruction the *natural substratum of human existence itself*, as a vain attempt to compensate for the loss of conquerable new territories of domination. Accordingly, the historic stakes to be contested between capital and labor have now become—and are bound to remain also in the future—*everything or nothing*, removing thereby even the *limited rationality* of the once unavoidable *defensive posture* of labor. For saving from destruction the elementary conditions of humanity's existence cannot be envisaged as a *concession* to be granted by ever more destructive capital in control of the social metabolic process. To expect that would amount to the greatest irrationality and the ultimate contradiction in terms.

10.6 / THE *DEFENSIVE POSTURE* OF the past has to be consigned to where it belongs: that is, irretrievably to the past, in order for it to be replaced by its historically sustainable alternative. For the effective negation of the global capital system is conceivable only through a strategically viable and conscious organizational intervention in its appropriate global setting. This is feasible only through the constitution and combative operation of a type of international organizational framework that is suitable to overcoming—through its historically viable practical operating principles and fully cooperative coherence—the chronic defensiveness and the damaging internal divisions of the labor movement in the past. Not the "Fifth" or the "Sixth International" which—by defining themselves in that way would inevitably reopen old wounds and unnecessary recriminatory controversies—but the *New International* engaged in the revolutionary negation of capital's destructive present order and in the constitution of a radically different mode of social metabolic interchange among its members. In other words, the *New International* through its name would indicate that not only defensiveness but also the unhappy divisive recriminations of the past have to be consigned to the past.

Accordingly, the *New International* would confront with *conscious positive determination* the now unavoidable historic challenges establishing the necessary organizational basis of *substantive equality* of its constitutive parts—be they strategically articulated political organizations or uncompromising social movements. This would mean constituting, on a much more secure ground than was feasible in the past, the mode of historically sustainable action through which the vital socialist transformation of our existing societies would be accomplished in the future.

Without the adoption of a viable socialist international perspective the labor movement as capital's hegemonic alternative cannot acquire its much needed strength. In this respect a *positively forward-looking* reconsideration of the history of the past internationals must be put into relief. Understandably, of course, the capitulatory Second International totally lost its relevance and need not concern us any

longer. However, even today the proper assessment of the historically sustainable radical international efforts remains for us an important issue, precisely in relation to the future. We cannot overlook in this respect the heavy burden of internal fractures on the radical wing of the socialist movement as those fractures emerged in the course of the last century and continue to exercise their painfully divisive influence even today. No one should deny that in due course all such fractures must be overcome in the interest of socialist labor's overall hegemonic alternative to the existing order, even if it may take some time to do so. What is absolutely certain, however, is that the task of overcoming those fractures can only be accomplished in a *positively shared* international organizational framework.

In terms of the necessary strategic priorities to be achieved, the organizationally cohesive and viable articulation and strengthening of the positively oriented framework of socialist international action occupies a most prominent place today. Success is inconceivable without the most defiant combative confrontation of capital's growing aggressiveness by the organized working class, in place of the defensive weaknesses of the past. For under the conditions of the capital system's deepening structural crisis one can already witness the intensification of capital's authoritarian aggressiveness against labor which can only worsen in the future. Fragmentation and division always tended to impose on labor the defensive posture and its corollary, the domination of labor by the class adversary. That was far from accidental. After all, the Roman ruling classes had invented and successfully practiced a long time before capitalism the wisdom of *divide et impera:* divide and rule.

With regard to the cohesive international framework of action the adoption of organizationally viable orienting principles is of a major importance. For in the past the assumption of the *programmatic necessity* of a *doctrinal unity* in the radical internationals proved to be in many ways detrimental to their envisaged advancement. It used to carry with it the drawbacks of constantly recurring divisiveness and fragmentation, instead of cohesive strength.

Retaining such requirements of *doctrinal unity* as the predefined orienting principle of the organizational framework would be equally detrimental for the development of the *New International*. For social and historical circumstances are necessarily different in a *globally varied* setting, calling for the adoption of significantly different organizational determinations according to the specific social and political conditions and corresponding strategic leverages.

Naturally, it is a self-evident requisite that all those who organizationally would belong to the *New International* define themselves in terms of their identification with the *broad general principle and the fundamental emancipatory objective of a socialist transformation of society*. However, embracing the broad general principle and

strategic objective of the socialist transformation of capital's social order does not mean any *doctrinal prescription* as to the sustainable particular ways of instituting the *practical measures and modes of action* leading to the realization of the adopted overall objective. The new approach envisaged in this sense is in sharp contrast to the terms in which the formerly advocated requirements of doctrinal unity have been as a rule spelled out in the past, to the detriment of the expected success. By contrast, it would be much more viable in the future to let the *relative merits* of the different ways and means be decided in a *positive* sense by the *actual realization* (or not) of the adopted tasks by the constituent parts and particular organizational units, in their combatively pursued social and political practice, according to the inevitably varying social and historical circumstances. That mode of operation would be in its results *cooperatively additive and cohesive*, instead of fragmenting. That is the way ahead under the challenging conditions of our time. The establishment and combative operation of the *New International* would be the most appropriate organizational framework for meeting such a challenge.

11. Structural Crisis Needs Structural Change

WHEN STRESSING THE NEED for a radical structural change it must be made clear right from the beginning that this is not a call for an unrealizable utopia.[204] On the contrary, the primary defining characteristic of modern utopian theories was precisely the projection that their intended improvement in the conditions of the workers' lives could be achieved well within the *existing structural framework* of the criticized societies. Thus Robert Owen of New Lanark, for instance, who had an ultimately untenable business partnership with the utilitarian liberal philosopher Jeremy Bentham, attempted the general realization of his enlightened social and educational reforms in that spirit. He was asking for the *impossible*. As we also know, the high-sounding "utilitarian" moral principle of "the greatest good for the greatest number" came to nothing since its Benthamite advocacy. The problem for us is that without a proper assessment of the nature of the economic and social crisis of our time—which by now cannot be denied by the defenders of the capitalist order even if they reject the need for a major change—the likelihood of success in this respect is negligible. The demise of the "welfare state" even in the mere handful of the privileged countries where it has been once instituted offers a sobering lesson on this score.

11.1 / LET ME START BY quoting a recent article by the editors of the authoritative daily newspaper of the international bourgeoisie, the *Financial Times*.

Talking about the dangerous financial crisis—acknowledged now by the editors themselves that it is dangerous—they end their article with these words: "Both sides [the Democrats and the Republicans] are to blame for a vacuum of leadership and responsible deliberation. It is a serious failure of governance and more dangerous

than Washington believes."[205] This is all that we get as editorial wisdom about the substantive issue of "sovereign indebtedness" and mounting budget deficits. What makes the *Financial Times* editorial even more vacuous than the "vacuum of leadership" deplored by the journal is the sonorous subtitle of this article: *"Washington Must Stop Posturing and Start Governing."* As if editorials like this could amount to more than posturing in the name of "governing"! The grave issue at stake is the catastrophic indebtedness of the powerhouse of global capitalism, the United States of America, where the government's debt alone (without adding corporate and private individual indebtedness) is counted as well above *14 trillion dollars,* which flashes in large illuminated numbers on the facade of a New York public building, indicating the irresistible trend of rising debt.

The point I wish to stress is that the crisis we have to face is a profound and deepening structural crisis that needs the adoption of far-reaching structural remedies in order to achieve a sustainable solution. It must also be stressed that the structural crisis of our time did not originate in 2007, with the "bursting of the US housing bubble," but at least four decades earlier. I spoke about it in such terms way back in 1967, well before the May 1968 explosion in France,[206] and I wrote in 1971, in the Preface to the third edition of *Marx's Theory of Alienation,* that the unfolding events and developments "dramatically underlined the intensification of the global structural crisis of capital."

In this respect it is necessary to clarify the relevant differences between types or modalities of crisis. It is not a matter of indifference whether a crisis in the social sphere can be considered a *periodic/conjunctural crisis,* or something much more fundamental than that. For obviously the way of dealing with a fundamental structural crisis cannot be conceptualized in terms of the categories of periodic or conjunctural crises. The crucial difference between the two sharply contrasting types of crises is that the periodic or conjunctural crises unfold and are more or less successfully resolved within the established framework, whereas the fundamental crisis affects that framework in its entirety.

In general terms, this distinction is not simply a question of the apparent severity of the contrasting types of crises. A periodic or conjunctural crisis can be dramatically severe—as the "Great World Economic Crisis" of 1929–33 happened to be—yet capable of a solution within the parameters of the given system. And in the same way, but in the opposite sense, the "non-explosive" character of a prolonged structural crisis, in contrast to the "great thunderstorms" (in Marx's words) through which periodic conjunctural crises can discharge and resolve themselves, may lead to fundamentally misconceived strategies, as a result of the misinterpretation of the absence of "thunderstorms"; as if their absence was the overwhelming evidence for the indefinite stability of "organized capitalism" and of the "integration of the working class."

It cannot be stressed enough that the crisis in our time is not intelligible without being referred to the broad overall social framework. This means that in order to clarify the nature of the persistent and deepening crisis all over the world today we must focus attention on the crisis of the capital system in its entirety. For the crisis of capital we are experiencing is an all-embracing structural crisis.

11.2 / LET US SEE, SUMMED up as briefly as possible, the defining characteristics of the structural crisis with which we are concerned.

The historical novelty of today's crisis is manifest under four main aspects:

1. Its character is universal, rather than restricted to one particular sphere, e.g. financial, or commercial, or affecting this or that particular branch of production, or applying to this rather than that type of labor, with its specific range of skills and degrees of productivity, etc.
2, Its scope is truly global,in the most threateningly literal sense of the term, rather than confined to a particular set of countries, as all major crises have been in the past.
3. Its time scale is extended, continuous—if you like, permanent—rather than limited and cyclic, as all former crises of capital happened to be.
4. Its mode of unfolding might be called creeping—in contrast to the more spectacular and dramatic eruptions and collapses of the past—while adding the proviso that even the most vehement or violent convulsions cannot be excluded as far as the future is concerned: i.e., when the complex machinery now actively engaged in "crisis-management" and in the more or less temporary "displacement" of the growing contradictions runs out of steam.

Here it is necessary to make some general points about the criteria of a structural crisis, as well as about the forms in which its solution may be envisaged:

- To put it in the simplest and most general terms, a structural crisis affects the totality of a social complex, in all its relations with its constituent parts or subcomplexes, as well as with other complexes to which it is linked. By contrast, a nonstructural crisis affects only some parts of the complex in question, and thus no matter how severe it might be with regard to the affected parts, it cannot endanger the continued survival of the overall structure.
- Accordingly, the displacement of contradictions is feasible only while the crisis is partial, relative and internally manageable by the system, requiring no more than shifts—even if major ones—within the relatively autonomous system itself. By the same token, a structural crisis calls into question the very existence of the

overall complex concerned, postulating its transcendence and replacement by some alternative complex.

- The same contrast may be expressed in terms of the limits any particular social complex happens to have in its immediacy, at any given time, as compared to those beyond which it cannot conceivably go. Thus a structural crisis is not concerned with the immediate limits but with the ultimate limits of a global structure.[207]

Thus in a fairly obvious sense, nothing could be more serious than the structural crisis of capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction that defines the ultimate limits of the established order. But even though profoundly serious in its all-important general parameters, on the face of it the structural crisis may not appear to be of such a deciding importance when compared to the dramatic vicissitudes of a major conjunctural crisis. For the thunderstorms through which the conjunctural crises discharge themselves are rather paradoxical in the sense that in their mode of unfolding they not only discharge (and impose) but also *resolve* themselves, to the degree to which that is feasible under the circumstances. This they can do precisely because of their partial character, which does not call into question the ultimate limits of the established global structure. At the same time, however (and for the same reason), they can only resolve the underlying deep-seated structural problems—which necessarily reassert themselves again and again in the form of the specific conjunctural crises—in a strictly partial and temporally also most limited way. Until, that is, the next conjunctural crisis appears on society's horizon.

By contrast, in view of the inescapably complex and prolonged nature of the structural crisis, unfolding in historical time in an *epochal* and not episodic/instantaneous sense, it is the cumulative interrelationship of the whole that decides the issue, even under the false appearance of "normality." This is because in the structural crisis everything is at stake, involving the all-embracing ultimate limits of the given order of which there cannot possibly be a "symbolic/paradigmatic" particular instance. Without understanding the overall systemic connections and implications of the particular events and developments we lose sight of the significant changes and of the corresponding levers of potential strategic intervention to positively affect them, in the interest of the necessary systemic transformation. Our social responsibility therefore calls for an uncompromising critical awareness of the emerging cumulative interrelationship, instead of looking for comforting reassurances in the world of illusory normality until the house collapses over our head.

11.3 / IT IS NECESSARY TO underline here that for nearly three decades after the Second World War the successful economic expansion in the dominant capitalist

countries generated the illusion even among some major intellectuals of the left that the historic phase of "crisis capitalism" had been overcome, leaving in its place what they called "advanced organized capitalism."

I want to illustrate this problem by quoting some passages from the work of one of the greatest militant intellectuals of the twentieth century, Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom, as you may well know from my book on Sartre, I have the highest regard. However, the adoption of the notion that by overcoming "crisis capitalism" the established order turned itself into "advanced capitalism" created some major dilemmas for Sartre. This is all the more significant because no one can deny Sartre's fully committed search for a viable emancipatory solution and his great personal integrity.

In relation to our problem we have to recall that in the important interview Sartre gave to the Italian Manifesto group—after outlining his conception of the insuperably negative implications of his own explanatory category of the unavoidably detrimental *institutionalization* of what he called the "fused group" in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*—he had to come to the painful conclusion that "while I recognize the need of an *organization,* I must confess that I don't see how the problems which confront *any stabilized structure* could be resolved."[208]

Here the difficulty is that the terms of Sartre's social analysis are set up in such a way that the various factors and correlations that in reality belong together, constituting different facets of fundamentally the *same societal complex*, are depicted by him in the form of most problematical dichotomies and oppositions, thereby generating insoluble dilemmas and an unavoidable defeat for the emancipatory social forces. This is clearly shown by the exchange between the Manifesto group and Sartre:

> *Manifesto:* On what precise bases can one prepare a revolutionary alternative?
>
> *Sartre:* I repeat, more on the basis of "*alienation*" than on "*needs*." In short, on the reconstruction of the *individual* and of *freedom*—the need for which is so pressing that even the most refined *techniques of integration* cannot afford to discount it.[209]

Thus Sartre, in his strategic assessment of how to overcome the oppressive character of capitalist reality, sets up a totally untenable opposition between the workers' "alienation" and their allegedly satisfied "needs," thereby making it all the more difficult to envisage a practically feasible positive outcome. And here the problem is not simply that he grants far too much credibility to the fashionable but extremely superficial sociological explanation of the *"refined techniques of integration"* in relation to the workers. Unfortunately, it is much more serious than that.

Indeed, the really disturbing problem at stake is the evaluation of the viability of *advanced capitalism* itself and the associated postulate of working-class "integration," which Sartre happens to share at the time to a large extent with Herbert Marcuse. For in actuality the truth of the matter is that in contrast to the undoubtedly feasible integration of some particular workers into the capitalist order, the *class* of labor—the structural antagonist of capital, representing the only *historically sustainable hegemonic alternative* to the capital system—cannot be integrated into capital's alienating and exploitative framework of societal reproduction. What makes that impossible is the underlying *structural antagonism* between capital and labor, emanating with insurmountable necessity from the class reality of antagonistic domination and subordination.

In this discourse even the minimal plausibility of the Marcuse-Sartre type of false alternative between continuing alienation and "satisfied need" is "established" on the basis of the derailing compartmentalization of capital's suicidally untenable globally entrenched structural interdeterminations upon which the elementary systemic viability of capital's one and only ruling societal metabolic order is necessarily premised. Thus it is extremely problematical to separate "advanced capitalism" from the so-called marginal zones and from the Third World. As if the reproductive order of the postulated "advanced capitalism" could sustain itself for *any length of time*, let alone *indefinitely* in the future, without the ongoing exploitation of the misconceived "marginal zones" and the imperialistically dominated Third World!

11.4 / IT IS NECESSARY TO quote here the relevant passage in which these problems are spelled out by Sartre. The revealing Manifesto interview passage in question reads as follows:

> *Advanced capitalism,* in relation to its awareness of its own condition, and despite the enormous disparities in the distribution of income, manages to satisfy the elementary needs of the majority of the working class—there remains of course the *marginal zones,* 15 percent of workers in the United States, the blacks and the immigrants; there remain the elderly; there remains, on the global scale, the *Third World*. But capitalism satisfies certain primary needs, and also satisfies certain needs which it has artificially created: for instance, the *need of a car*. It is this situation which has caused me to revise my "theory of needs," since these needs are no longer, in a situation of *advanced capitalism*, in systematic opposition to the system. On the contrary, they partly become, under the control of that system, an instrument of *integration of the proletariat* into certain processes engendered and directed by profit. The worker

> exhausts himself in producing a car and in earning enough to buy one; this *acquisition* gives him the *impression* of having satisfied a "*need*." The system which exploits him provides him simultaneously with a goal and with the possibility of reaching it. The consciousness of the intolerable character of the system must therefore no longer be sought in the impossibility of satisfying elementary needs but, above all else, in the consciousness of alienation—in other words, in the fact that *this life is not worth living and has no meaning*, that this mechanism is a deceptive mechanism, that these needs are artificially created, that they are false, that they are exhausting and only serve profit. But to unite the class on this basis is even *more difficult.*[210]

If we accept at face value this characterization of the "advanced capitalist" order, in that case the task of producing emancipatory consciousness is not only "*more difficult*" but quite *impossible*. But the dubious ground on which we can reach such *a prioristic* imperatival and pessimistic/self-defeating conclusion—prescribing from the height of the intellectual's "new theory of needs" the abandonment by the workers of their "acquisitive artificial needs," instantiated by the motor car, and their replacement by the thoroughly abstract postulate which posits for them that "*this life is not worth living and has no meaning*" (a noble but rather abstract imperatival postulate effectively contradicted in reality by the tangible need of the members of the working class for securing the conditions of their economically sustainable existence) is both the *acceptance* of a set of totally untenable *assertions* and the equally untenable *omission* of some vital determining features of the actually existing capital system in its historically irreversible *structural crisis*.

For a start, to talk about *advanced* capitalism—when the capital system as a mode of social metabolic reproduction finds itself in its *descending phase of historical development,* and therefore is only *capitalistically* advanced but in no other sense at all, thereby capable of sustaining itself only in an ever more *destructive* and therefore ultimately *self-destructive* way—is extremely problematical. Another assertion: the characterization of the *overwhelming majority of humankind*—in the category of poverty, including the "blacks and the immigrants," the "elderly," and, "on the global scale, the Third World"—as belonging to the *marginal zones* (in affinity with Marcuse's "outsiders"), is no less untenable. For in reality it is the advanced capitalist world that constitutes the long-term totally unsustainable privileged *margin* of the overall system, with its ruthless "elementary need-denial" to the greater part of the world, and not what is described by Sartre in his Manifesto interview as the marginal zones. Even with regard to the United States of America the margin of poverty is greatly underrated, at merely 15 percent. Besides, the characterization of the workers' motor cars as

nothing more than purely "artificial needs" that "only serve profit" could not be more one-sided. For, in contrast to many intellectuals, not even relatively well-off particular workers, let alone the members of the class of labor as a whole, have the luxury of finding their place of work next door to their bedroom.

At the same time, on the side of the astonishing omissions, some of the gravest structural contradictions and failures are missing from Sartre's depiction of "advanced capitalism," virtually emptying the whole concept of meaning. In this sense one of the most important substantive needs without which no society—past, present, or future—could survive, is the need for work. Both for the productively active individuals—embracing all of them in a fully emancipated social order—and for society in general in its historically sustainable relationship to nature. The necessary failure to solve this fundamental structural problem, affecting *all* categories of work not only in the Third World but even in the most privileged countries of advanced capitalism, with its perilously rising unemployment, constitutes one of the *absolute limits* of the capital system in its entirety.

Another grave problem that underscores the present and future historical unviability of capital is the calamitous shift toward the *parasitic sectors* of the economy — like the crisis-producing adventurist speculation that plagues (as a matter of *objective necessity*, often misrepresented as systemically irrelevant *personal* failure) the financial sector and the institutionalized/legally buttressed *fraudulence* closely associated with it—in contradistinction to the productive branches of socioeconomic life required for the satisfaction of genuine human need. This is a shift that stands in menacingly sharp contrast to the ascending phase of capital's historic development, when the prodigious systemic expansionary dynamism (including the Industrial Revolution) was overwhelmingly due to socially viable and further enhanceable productive achievements. We have to add to all this the *massively wasteful* economic burdens imposed on society in an authoritarian way by the state and the military-industrial complex—with the permanent arms industry and the corresponding wars—as an integral part of the perverse "economic growth" of advanced organized capitalism.

To mention just one more of the catastrophic implications of advanced capital's systemic development, we must bear in mind the prohibitively wasteful global ecological encroachment of our no longer tenable mode of social metabolic reproduction on the finite planetary world,[211] with its rapacious exploitation of the nonrenewable material resources and the increasingly more dangerous destruction of nature. Saying this is not "being wise after the event," I wrote in the same period when Sartre gave his Manifesto interview:

> Another basic contradiction of the capitalist system of control is that it cannot separate "advance" from *destruction,* nor "progress" from *waste*—however catastrophic the results. The more it unlocks the powers of productivity, the more it must unleash the powers of destruction; and the more it extends the volume of production, the more it must bury everything under mountains of suffocating waste. The concept of *economy* is radically incompatible with the "economy" of capital production which, of necessity, adds insult to injury by first using up with rapacious wastefulness the *limited resources* of our planet, and then further aggravates the outcome by *polluting and poisoning* the human environment with its mass-produced waste and effluence.[212]

Thus the problematical *assertions* and the seminally important *omissions* of Sartre's characterization of advanced capitalism greatly weaken the power of negation of his emancipatory discourse. His dichotomous principle which repeatedly asserts the "irreducibility of the cultural order to the natural order" is always on the lookout for finding solutions in terms of the "cultural order," at the level of the individual's consciousness, through the committed intellectual's "*work of consciousness upon consciousness.*" He appeals to the idea that the required solution lies in increasing the "consciousness of alienation"—that is, in terms of his "cultural order"—while at the same time discarding the viability of grounding the revolutionary strategy on *need* belonging to the "natural order." This is material need that is said to be already satisfied for the majority of the workers and that in any case constitutes a "deceptive and false mechanism" and an "instrument of integration of the proletariat."

To be sure, Sartre is deeply concerned with the challenge of addressing the issue of how to increase "the consciousness of the intolerable character of the system." But, as a matter of unavoidable consideration, the leverage indicated by him as the vital condition of success—the power of the "consciousness of alienation" stressed by Sartre—would itself badly need some objective underpinning. Otherwise, the idea (even setting aside the indicated leverage's weakness of self-referential circularity) that it somehow "*can* prevail over against the intolerable character of the system" is bound to be dismissed as a noble but ineffective *cultural* advocacy. That this is problematic even in Sartre's own terms of reference is indicated by his rather pessimistic words wherein he shows that the need is to defeat the materially and culturally destructive and structurally entrenched reality of "this miserable ensemble which is our planet," with its "horrible, ugly, bad determinations, without hope."

Accordingly, the primary question concerns the—demonstrability or not—of the *objectively intolerable* character of the system itself. For if the demonstrable intolerability of the system is missing in *substantive* terms, as proclaimed by the notion of

"advanced capitalism's ability to satisfy material needs" except in the "marginal zones," then the "*long and patient labor in the construction of consciousness*" advocated by Sartre remains well-nigh impossible.[213] It is that objective grounding that needs to be (and in actuality could be) established in its own comprehensive terms of reference, requiring the radical demystification of the increasing destructiveness of advanced capitalism. The "*consciousness* of the intolerable character of the system" can only be built on that *objective grounding*—which includes the suffering caused by "advanced" capital's failure to satisfy even the elementary need for food not only in marginal zones but for countless millions, as clearly evidenced by food riots in many countries—so as to be able to overcome the postulated dichotomy between the cultural order and the natural order.

11.5 / IN ITS *ASCENDING* PHASE the capital system was successfully asserting its productive accomplishments on the basis of its internal expansionary dynamism—still without the imperative of a *monopolistic/imperialist* drive of the capitalistically most advanced countries for militarily secured world domination. Yet, through the historically irreversible circumstance of entering the *productively descending* phase, the capital system had become inseparable from an ever-intensifying need for the militaristic/monopolistic extension and overstretch of its structural framework, tending in due course on the internal productive plane toward the establishment and the criminally wasteful operation of a "permanent arms industry," together with the wars necessarily associated with it.

In fact, well before the outbreak of the First World War Rosa Luxemburg clearly identified the nature of this fateful monopolistic/imperialist development on the destructively productive plane by writing in her book *The Accumulation of Capital* about the role of massive militarist production that "capital itself ultimately controls this automatic and rhythmic movement of militarist production through the legislature and a press whose function is to mold so-called public opinion. That is why this particular province of capitalist accumulation at first seems capable of infinite expansion."[214]

In another respect, the increasingly wasteful utilization of energy and vital material strategic resources carried with it not only the ever more destructive articulation of capital's self-assertive structural determinations on the (by legislatively manipulated "public opinion" never even questioned, let alone properly regulated) military plane but also with regard to the increasingly destructive encroachment of capital-expansion on nature. Ironically, but by no means surprisingly, this turn of *regressive historical development* of the capital system as such also carried with it some bitterly negative consequences for the international organization of labor.

Indeed, this new articulation of the capital system in the last third of the nineteenth century, with its monopolistic imperialist phase inseparable from its fully

extended global ascendancy, opened up a new modality of (most antagonistic and ultimately untenable) expansionary dynamism to the overwhelming benefit of a mere handful of privileged imperialist countries, postponing thereby the "moment of truth" that goes with the system's irrepressible *structural crisis* in our own time. This type of monopolistic imperialist development inevitably gave a major boost to the possibility of militaristic capital-expansion and accumulation, no matter how great a price had to be paid in due course for the ever-intensifying destructiveness of the new expansionary dynamism. Indeed, the militarily underpinned monopolistic dynamism had to assume the form of two devastating *global wars,* as well as the total annihilation of humankind implicit in a potential *Third World War,* in addition to the ongoing perilous destruction of nature that became evident in the second half of the twentieth century.

IN OUR TIME WE are experiencing the deepening structural crisis of the capital system. Its destructiveness is visible everywhere, and it shows no signs of diminishing. With regard to the future it is crucial how we conceptualize the nature of the crisis in order to envisage its solution. For the same reason it is also necessary to reexamine some of the major solutions projected in the past. Here it is not possible to do more than to mention, with stenographic brevity, the contrasting approaches that have been offered, indicating at the same time what happened to them in actuality.

First, we have to remember that it was to his merit that liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill considered how problematical endless capitalist growth might be, suggesting as the solution of this problem the "stationary state of the economy." Naturally, such a "stationary state" under the capital system could be nothing more than wishful thinking, because it is totally incompatible with the imperative of capital-expansion and accumulation. Even today, when so much destructiveness is caused by unqualified growth and the most wasteful allocation of our vital energy and strategic material resources, the mythology of growth is constantly reasserted, coupled with the wishful projection of "reducing our carbon imprint" by the year 2050, while in reality moving in the opposite direction. Thus the reality of liberalism turned out to be the aggressive destructiveness of neo-liberalism.

Similar fates affected the social democratic perspective. Marx clearly formulated his warnings about this danger in his *Critique of the Gotha Program,* but they were totally ignored. Here, too, the contradiction between the promised Bernsteinian "evolutionary socialism" and its realization everywhere turned out to be striking. Not only in virtue of the capitulation of social-democratic parties and governments to the lure of imperialist wars but also through the transformation of social democracy in general—including British "New Labour"—into more or less open versions of

neoliberalism, abandoning not only the "road of evolutionary socialism" but even the once promised implementation of significant social reform.

Moreover, a much propagandized solution to the gruesome inequalities of the capital system was the promised worldwide diffusion of the "welfare state" after the Second World War. However, the prosaic reality of this claimed historic achievement turned out to be not only the utter failure to institute the welfare state in any part of the Third World, but the ongoing liquidation of the relative achievements of the post-war welfare state—in the field of Social Security, health care, and education—even in the handful of privileged capitalist countries where they were once instituted.

And of course we cannot disregard the promise to realize the highest phase of socialism (by Stalin and others) through the overthrow and abolition of capitalism. For, tragically, seven decades after the October Revolution the reality turned out to be the restoration of capitalism in a regressive neoliberal form in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

11.6 / THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF all of these failed attempts—despite some of their major differences—is that they all tried to accomplish their objectives within the structural framework of the established social metabolic order. However, as painful historical experience teaches us, our problem is not simply "the overthrow of capitalism." For even to the extent to which that objective can be accomplished, it is bound to be only a very unstable achievement, because whatever can be *overthrown* can also be *restored.* The real—and much more difficult—issue is the necessity of *radical structural change*.

The tangible meaning of such *structural change* is the *complete eradication of capital itself from the social metabolic process.* In other words, the eradication of capital from the metabolic process of societal reproduction.

Capital itself is an all-embracing mode of *control,* which means that it either controls everything or it implodes as a system of societal reproductive control. Consequently, capital as such cannot be controlled in some of its aspects while leaving the rest in place. All attempted measures and modalities of "controlling" capital's various functions on a lasting basis have failed in the past. In view of its *structurally entrenched uncontrollability*—which means that there is no conceivable leverage *within the structural framework of the capital system* through which the system could be brought under lasting control—capital must be completely *eradicated.* This is the central meaning of Marx's lifework.

In our time the question of control—through the institution of *structural change* in response to our deepening structural crisis—is becoming urgent not only in the financial sector, due to the wasted trillions of dollars, but everywhere. The

leading capitalist financial journals complain that "China is sitting on three trillion dollars of cash," wishfully projecting again solutions through the "better use of that money." But the sobering truth is that the total worsening indebtedness of capitalism amounts to ten times more than China's "unused dollars." Besides, even if the huge current indebtedness could be eliminated somehow, although no one can say how, the real question would remain: How was it generated in the first place, and how can it be made sure that it is not generated again in the future? This is why the productive dimension of the system—namely the capital relation itself—is what must be fundamentally changed in order to overcome the *structural crisis* through the appropriate *structural change.*

THE DRAMATIC FINANCIAL CRISIS which we experienced in the last three years is only one aspect of the capital system's three-pronged destructiveness:

1. in the military field, with capital's interminable wars since the onset of monopolistic imperialism in the final decades of the nineteenth century, and its ever more devastating weapons of mass destruction in the last sixty years;
2. in the intensification through capital's obvious destructive impact on ecology directly affecting and endangering by now the elementary natural foundation of human existence itself; and
3. in the domain of material production an ever-increasing waste, due to the advancement of "destructive production" in place of the once eulogized "creative" or "productive destruction."

These are the grave systemic problems of our *structural crisis,* which can only be solved by a comprehensive *structural change*.

IN CONCLUSION, LET ME quote the last five lines of *The Dialectic of Structure and History*:

> Naturally, historical dialectic in the abstract cannot offer any guarantee for a positive outcome. To expect that would mean renouncing our role in developing social consciousness, which is integral to the historical dialectic. Radicalizing social consciousness in an emancipatory spirit is what we need for the future, and we need it more than ever before.[215]

12. The Mountain We Must Conquer

Reflections on the State

Introduction

UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF the capital system's deepening structural crisis the problems of the state loom, inevitably, ever larger.[216] For in the long established mode of overall political decision-making processes the state is expected to provide the solution to so many problems that darken our horizion, but fails to do so. On the contrary, attempted state remedial measures—from dangerous military interventions to addressing grave financial collapses on a monumental scale, including rescue operations of private capitalism undertaken by ever-escalating state debt to the tune of trillions of dollars—seem to aggravate the problems, despite vain reassurances to the contrary.

The difficult questions that must be answered today are these: what is happening in our planetary household in the present critical times? Why do the traditional state remedies fail to produce the anticipated results? Is the state as it had been historically constituted capable of solving our acute problems, or has the state as such become a major contributor to the worsening problems themselves and to their chronic insolubility? What are the requirements of a radically different alternative? Are there any viable prospects for the future if a substantively different way of controlling the social metabolism cannot be instituted against the preponderance of the perilously failing state determinations? Is there a way out from the vicious circle to which we are confined by capital's incorrigible structural determinations of social metabolic control in the material reproductive domain and within the framework of its necessary state formations?

All these questions are painfully difficult to answer in light of past developments. For the vital corrective function of capital's historically constituted state formations was always the maintenance and strengthening of the system's irrepressible material self-expansionary imperatives,[217] and they continue to be the same even in our own historical time when doing so becomes suicidal to humanity. Thus the challenge today calls for a radical critique of the state in its fundamental terms of reference, as the historically established modality of overall decision-making more or less directly affects the totality of societal reproductive functions, from the elementary material productive processes to the most mediated cultural domains. At the same time, it must be stressed that the critique is viable only if it carries with it a historically sustainable alternative. In other words, it is not enough to "wipe the slate clean," as it were, in the form of simply rejecting the existing modality of capital's overall decision-making processes. Only the self-interested apologists of the capital system can accuse the advocates of the socialist alternative with asking for "utopian lawless anarchy." Nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed the complacently claimed continuing success of the past modality of state practices is precisely what turns out to be false on closer inspection. For what used to work within the more limited framework of the nation-states in the past proves to be badly wanting in a world in which the fundamental material structures of capital's social metabolism are poised toward their global integration without their feasible equivalent at the state-legitimatory political plane.

The real issue is that the overall decision-making processes of capital's state formations by their very nature—due to the social metabolic ground of material reproduction upon which they have been historically constituted—can represent only the paradigm of alienated superimposition in their incorrigible mode of operation. To envisage anything meaningfully contrasting to that, it would be necessary to postulate a substantively different social metabolic ground for the established social order's overall decision-making processes. For given the necessary centrifugality of their material microcosms, which are expected to secure the conditions of societal reproduction as a whole—and given that they do that precisely through their antagonistic structural determinations, the state formations of the capital system could never fulfill their required corrective and stabilizing functions, and thereby prevail over potentially disruptive tendencies, without superimposing themselves on all encountered resistances as an alienated body par excellence of overall decision-making. This is the case irrespective of whether we are talking about the liberal-democratic institutional framework or about any of capital's openly dictatorial state formations. As separate/alienated organs of overall political control they are all under the overwhelming requirement to assert "might-as-right" in the interest of fulfilling

their state-legitimatory overruling and corrective functions, as we shall discuss in the course of the present study.

In this sense, far from being guilty of advocating some "utopian lawless anarchy," the socialist alternative is concerned with the overall conception and practical establishment of a qualitatively different mode of societal interchange, a mode in which the constitutive cells or microcosms of the given social metabolism can truly cohere into a historically sustainable whole. The reality of "globalization," much idealized in our time, is bound to remain a dangerously one-sided trend, pregnant with explosive material antagonisms, for as long as the constitutive cells or microcosms of our planetary household are internally torn by the ultimately irreconcilable contradictions of their prevailing centrifugality. For the centrifugality characteristic of the innermost determinations of the capital system as such carries with it the structurally entrenched imperatives of antagonistic capital-expansion and their separate/alienated state-legitimatory defense. Consequently, given its absolutely crucial function in the global societal reproduction process, the kind of state-legitimatory defense of the established social metabolism cannot assume any other form than superimposition at all cost. And that amounts, whenever necessary, even to the most violent assertion of the interests of the contending forces at the level of overall political/military decision-making in the domain of interstate relations.

Naturally, the most disturbing truth in this matter is that "the Law" instituted by capital's state formations on the antagonistic material ground of its own constitutive microcosms, internally as well as internationally, cannot work, and indeed does not work. It works de facto only, by asserting itself as force—or "might-as-right"—arising and prevailing as state-legitimated imposition over against all potential resistance and recalcitrance. In that sense the Law imposes itself on the basis of categorically decreeing the constitutional viability of itself in its symbiosis with the established relation of forces, and continues to provide their state-legitimation with the same categorical claim rooted in force, until there is a major change in the relation of forces themselves. Thus the constitutional proclamation and legally unchallengeable imposition of "might-as-right" can continue, whether it is done in the most ruthless dictatorial fashion or with the "smiling face" of the liberal-democratic state formations of the capital system. But despite all attempts at the unhistorical eternalizations of the state,[218] the imposition of might-as-right over society cannot go on forever. The moment of truth arrives when the absolute limits of the capital system are activated in a historically determinate form, undermining the necessary corrective viability of the system's state formations in all of their given and conceivable forms. For the states of the capital system are not intelligible at all in and by themselves, but only as the required corrective complementarity to the otherwise unmanageable structural

defects of their expansion-oriented mode of social metabolic reproduction. And that structural imperative of expansion can be driven forward by the successful accumulation process only for as long as it can prevail in its material terms of reference confronting nature without destroying humanity itself. This means that the insuperable limits of the established state formations reside not simply at a politically corrigible level, as vainly attempted and justified in traditional jurisprudential discourse, but in the absolute limits of capital's ultimately suicidal mode of social metabolic control, activated through the structural crisis of the overall system.

Naturally, such considerations cannot enter capital's horizon either at the level of its incorrigible centrifugal material reproductive determinations or under the state-legitimatory ideological rationalizations of its political regulatory practices. That makes the historically well-known modalities of imposing might-as-right in the name of "the Law," together with their jurisprudential idealizations, extremely problematical. In this sense the law, as alienated imposition over the individuals who constitute society as a whole, cannot work de jure, namely as the law right and proper. By contrast, the only law that can work as law (on capital's material ground unrealizable sense of de jure), and indeed must work in the interest of cohesion as the absolute requirement of any historically sustainable social metabolic control in a truly globalized world in our future, is "the law we give ourselves." This is not a question of counterposing the "rule of law" as the necessary regulatory framework of societal interchange to some abstract imperative of ungrounded *morality*. That kind of counterposition happens to be the convenient escape clause of liberalism and utilitarianism when, in view of their unacknowledged idealizations of the antagonisms inseparable from the reality of the nation-states, they fail to fill the categories of "universal law" and "international law" with real content.[219] No such self-serving opposition between law and morality is sustainable on any rational ground.

The real opposition that must be firmly asserted is between law *autonomously determined* by the freely associated individuals at all levels of their life, from their most immediate productive activities to the highest regulatory requirements of their cultural and overall societal decision-making processes on the one hand, and law *superimposed* over above them on the other, through the *apologetic codification* of the established relation of forces by a separate body, be that body the most "democratic" in its *formal state-legitimatory* sense. Accordingly, the false opposition between morality and law must be rejected not only as the liberal/utilitarian escape clause. We find that kind of opposition widespread also among the various, more or less openly authoritarian adherents of "real-politics," and this time at the expense of morality, mindlessly condemned by the "realists of power" as "mere moralizing." In both cases the false opposition of law and morality can be rejected only on the ground of a *substantively*

equitable socialist metabolic order, grounded on the kind of productive microcosms in which the individuals can—and do—*set the law to themselves.* But that order is conceivable only by *eradicating* capital from the social metabolic process and thereby superseding the necessary *centrifugality* of the long established constitutive cells of societal interchange.

It is necessary to consider in the same context the characteristic misrepresentation of another issue of major importance. It concerns an a prioristic judgment repeatedly asserted in a shallow condemnatory sense against "direct democracy" even by some genuine believers in the once progressive liberal tradition. And of course this negative judgment is at the same time circularly used in favor of the claimed self-evident validity of "representative democracy," in virtue of its contrast, by definition, to the condemned "direct democracy." Moreover, we are expected to agree with the soundness of that view even when the writers in question are willing to admit the painfully evident actual failure of the type of state regulatory system they nevertheless continue to idealize. The trouble is that even apart from the overwhelming evidence for the failure of representative democracy in every country, not to mention its periodic transmutation into dictatorial forms, the great weakness of the advocated position is twofold. First, because it suffers from the fetishistic mechanical quantification of asserting that in historical circumstances different from the characteristics of extremely small states—like the Athenian democracy at the time of its decision-making *agora*—it is inconceivable to have other than representative democracy. And second, because the propounders of this approach narrowly confine the problem itself—again in the interest of asserting a circularly self-referential and self-validating position—to the *political/institutional domain,* although in reality it is incomparably broader and more fundamental than that.

The crucial issue concerns the second weakness of this position, which has a bearing also on the first. For it is totally beside the point to debate the *size* of the advocated regulatory framework without addressing the much more relevant and fundamental question of the *type*—and thereby the *qualitative determinations*—of the decision-making structures and corresponding forms of control. What makes the state formations of the capital system perilously unsustainable under the present historical conditions is the *antagonistic centrifugality* of the constitutive cells of the established order of social metabolic control. That kind of state regulatory framework, in view of its innermost antagonistic determinations, is unworkable not only on an all-embracing global scale but in no matter how small a size it might be scaled down to.

The real challenge is, therefore, the historically sustainable overcoming of the structurally entrenched antagonisms in the *constitutive cells* of capital's social order, which are responsible for the *centrifugality* of its incurable systemic determinations.

That is the only way to provide an alternative type of cohesive regulatory framework which can be *laterally co-ordinated* and *co-operatively structured* from its smallest societal reproductive microcosms to its absolutely unavoidable all-embracing forms of decision-making in the future. The fundamental stakes of our time—in all domains, from the elementary material reproductive processes to the gravest potential interstate collisions that resulted in catastrophic wars in the past—call for the *qualitative redefinition,* in a practically sustainable sense, of the constitutive cells of our social order, in the sense of superseding its ever more destructive centrifugality by eradicating capital itself from the ongoing metabolic process.

Accordingly, the real stakes concern the modality of *decision-making as such,* which should not be—with self-serving tendentiousness—confounded with the necessarily self-legitimatory decision-making organs and processes of the *state* itself. The apologists of "representative democracy" want to confine the solutions of our grave problems to the strictly *formal* equality and most obvious *substantive iniquitousness* of the state-regulatory *political* domain, where it cannot be found. One must get out of that self-defeating vicious circle, with its alienated decision-making processes superimposed on the people. The real issue is not "direct democracy" or "representative democracy" but the effective and self-fulfilling regulation of their mode of existence by the individuals under the conditions of *substantive democracy,* in contrast to the political legislative vacuity of easily curruptible "representative democracy." And the only viable way of making democracy substantive—and not "representative" in a most remote way, and at the same time of course more or less intensely resented—is by instituting a form of decision-making from which *recalcitrance* is absent because the social individuals *set the law to themselves,* so as to be able to *autonomously modify* it whenever the changing circumstances of their self-determined societal metabolic processes so require. But that is feasible only if the overall conditions of their existence are materially grounded on *constitutive cells qualitatively different* from capital's social order, because antagonistic cetrifugality itself is consigned to the past. That is the positive requirement of a truly cohesive, globally sustainable overall societal metabolic structure that can overcome in its state formations the destructive implications of superimposing *false universality*—inevitably by the force of arms, as fatefully experienced in the past—on its internally torn antagonistic material constituents. It has been reported that in a conversation with Margaret Thatcher on nuclear disarmament Gorbachev quoted a Russian proverb according to which "once in a year even an unloaded gun can go off." No one in their right mind should seriously expect from the existing state legitimatory forms of regulation any guarantee for the future against the grave implications of that.

THE CONTRADICTORY DETERMINATIONS of these problems had been exposed to public scrutiny well over two and a quarter centuries ago, way back at the time of the American and the French Revolutions which coincided with the onset of the great Industrial Revolution.

The line of demarcation was ineradicably marked by the appearance of the problem of *substantive equality* on the historical agenda under the conditions of the revolutionary turmoil itself. The militant advocates of substantive equality could not put it in sharper terms than condemning with utter contempt the past and present political evasions of this seminal issue: "From time immemorial they hypocritically repeat: *all men are equal;* and from time immemorial the most degrading and monstrous inequality insolently weighs upon the human race." And they could also clarify their vital concern in a most tangible way by adding: "We need not only that equality of rights written into the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; we want it in our midst, under the roofs of our houses."[220] In this way the rejection of the purely *formal/legal* measures of all projected remedy—which plagued not only in those times but continued to plague all the way down to our own days the traditional state-legitimatory approaches to these problems—was combined with the necessary requirements of any practically viable solution, by looking for answers in the economic and social domain. Naturally, by focusing attention on the traditionally missing dimension of political decision-making, the role of the state itself had been subjected to critical scrutiny, even if at the time of the French Revolution only in an embryonic form. This crucial issue could only assume its overriding importance half a century later, in the Marxian conception.

Looking back in the history of political thought we find that the fundamental concern of the debated theories of the state, from Plato and Aristotle onward, was always the different *forms* in which the modalities of overall decision-making, with rival benefits or drawbacks, could be praised or blamed. One form or another of the state—or of the rival constitutions in Aristotle's overview—was always taken for granted as the necessary overarching mode of decision-making. The same goes for the theories of "ideal states" in Ancient Greece and also much later. Thus in this respect we could witness a significant change toward the end of the eighteenth century, when the state as such started to become the object of critical reflection, in contrast to questioning only the relative merits of the state's different ways of superimposing itself on social life as the ultimate arbiter in all major matters.

Understandably, the revolutionary upheavals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had to bring with them not only a growing awareness of classes and class antagonisms, as well as of the impact of some major interstate wars, but also the crisis of politics itself and the necessary acknowledgment that the old ways

of dealing with such crises could no longer work. Ultimately this circumstance confronted the major thinkers of the age with the almost prohibitive problem of addressing the *legitimacy* or not of the *law itself.* Some, like the romantic philosophers, did it in an apologetic and retrograde way, conceptualizing history in a most reactionary fashion by wanting to turn its wheels backwards. Others, like Immanuel Kant, projected their noble but utterly wishful "ought-to-be" of a *"perpetual peace,"* and of course to no avail. However, the most grandiose solution, spelled out in full conformity to his bourgeois class horizon, was offered by Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Right*. Accordingly, while acknowledging the fundamental and potentially most disruptive and far-reaching social antagonisms of his age, Hegel nevertheless reasserted with the firmest class-bound justification the unquestionable legitimacy of the law. He did that in world historical terms, appealing to nothing less than the authority of the *Weltgeist* (world spirit). But he could only provide such answer in the name of his grandiloquent *Theodicaea:* the "justification of God in history"[221] at the price of arbitrarily terminating at the same time history itself in his postulated "Europe as the end of history," with the necessary national wars of the European "Germanic" states, including empire-building England, warmly commended by Hegel.

Liberalism entered the historical stage in the same period of late eighteenth-century revolutionary upheavals, but in a more prosaic garb. It always assumed the totally unproblematical, indeed self-evident validity of its own attitude to legislation and societal management as representing "the whole of society." At the same time, it was willing to contemplate and institute ameliorations, in view of the erupting problems and conflicts of the revolutionary turmoil, but always well within the established structural framework of the existing order, subjecting it only to marginal critique. Neither the historical dimension of the constitution of the states, nor their questionable legitimacy represented any problem to liberalism. The boundless self-commending assumptions in its own approach, coupled with partial reformatory sympathy, seemed to be enough for its self-justification. In other words, liberalism was characterized both by the systematic evasion of the fundamentals, including the question of legitimacy of law-making in other than technical/procedural terms, and in a positive way by the advocacy of limited social and political improvements, including the extension of the franchise for parliamentary elections. Such combination of "balanced" conflict-evasion and structurally containable reform—the telling hallmarks of liberalism—may well explain its relative success among all of capital's state formations in the past. But in no way could it amount to significant changes. Liberalism could never advocate an *equitable* society; only a *"more equitable"* one, which always meant *far less than equitable.* Even at its most progressive phase of development liberalism confined its reformatory views and corresponding practical efforts strictly to the sphere of the

distribution of the goods produced—naturally with negligible lasting success. For liberalism always closed its eyes to the embarrassing fact that meaningful improvement toward an equitable society could only result from a fundamental change in the structure of *production* itself. This could not be otherwise because the sphere of distribution was *structurally predetermined* by the unalterable consignment of the class of labor to a necessarily subordinate position in society, given the state-legitimated and forcefully protected allocation of the means of production to the class constituted by the personifications of capital. Accordingly, to have a more iniquitous system of distribution than the structurally entrenched capital system was quite inconceivable, condemning thereby liberal enlightenment even at its best to purely marginal efficacy. The same went for the liberal advocacy of "state restraint," which always had to be accommodated well within the structurally prejudged framewok of the unquestionable overall defense of capital's societal reproductive order. And that had to be—and indeed had been—unquestioningly state-legitimated by all forms of liberalism. Not surprisingly, therefore, simultaneously to the unfolding of the capital system's *structural crisis,* the once-upon-a-time reformatorily inclined liberalism speedily metamorphosed itself into a most aggressive form of state-apologetic *neoliberalism*. This is how the moment of truth turned Bentham's "greatest happiness or greatest felicity principle" into an accusing finger toward neoliberal liberalism in our historical time.

Naturally, these were not redressable historical contingencies but necessary developments, dramatically unfolding in conjunction with the activation of capital's absolute limits through the maturation of its systemic crisis. For a very long time it was the gratuitous promise of all kinds of capital-apologetics—from the disingenuous postulates of now completely abandoned "evolutionary socialism," and from the "modernization" theories for overcoming "third world underdevelopment" all the way to the fiction of globally instituting the "welfare state," which is now vanishing even from the handful of its privileged countries—that the *"cake to be distributed"* will *eternally grow,* bringing full happiness to absolutely everyone. Abundant *distribution* will take care of everything, no one should therefore worry about the problems of *production.* But the cake simply refused to grow so as to match any variety of the projected "greatest felicity." Capital's structural crisis had put an end to all such fantasies. It is said that during the French Revolution, when it was reported to Marie-Antoinette that the people were starving because they had no bread, the ill-fated Queen responded with "Why don't they eat cake?" In the light of the deepening structural crisis and its customary justifications, Marie-Antoinette could be credited with an infinitely more realistic solution than the defenders of the capital system in our time.

The radical shift from the self-apologetic concern with totally unrealizable "more equitable" distribution—when in reality the tiniest percentage expropriates to itself

much more than the lion's share of wealth, forcefully protected by the state—to a radical change in the structural determinations of production is essential. For the objective trends of development in our time indicate worsening conditions everywhere, with austerity policies ruthlessly imposed by capitalist governments on their working population even in the richest capitalistically advanced countries. The class of labor is gravely affected by the measures to which it must be subjected[222] in the interest of maintaining the profitability of a fetishistic and cruelly dehumanizing system. Thus the great challenge for the realization of an equitable social order that erupted on the historical stage in revolutionary turmoil toward the end of the eighteenth century haunts our historical time. This is because no solution is feasible to our ever-aggravating problems without the adoption of the vital orienting principle of *substantive equality* as the fundamental regulator of the social metabolic process in a truly globalized world.

But of course nothing could be more alien to the operation of the capital system in its structural crisis than the institution of real equality. It is constituted as a system of structurally entrenched hierarchies that must be protected in every way by its state formations. On capital's side the structural crisis of our age activates the demand for an ever greater direct involvement of the state in the continued survival of the system, even if that runs counter to the self-mythology of the superior "private enterprise." *"Save the System,"* as the London based capital-apologetic weekly journal, the *Economist,* demanded on its front page in 2009, at the time of the eruption of the global financial crisis. Naturally, the major capitalist states all duly obliged with trillions devoted to their rescue operations.

However, the underlying issue is far greater than the periodic emergencies. The most serious objective trend of development in this respect in the political economic domain, going back to the end of the 1960s, is the *"equalization of the differential rate of exploitation,"*[223] deeply affecting the living conditions of the working classes even in the most privileged capitalist countries. Displaying the true meaning of "globalization," this is an incurable objective trend—a veritable political economic law—inseparable from the imperative of profitable capital-accumulation on a global scale. Accordingly, the changing share of labor in overall social wealth must indicate an inevitably downward trend through increased exploitation everywhere, including the former beneficiaries of colonization and imperialism. True to the nature of the established social metabolic order, nothing could be more *perverse* a trend of global development, asserting itself as one of the greatest ironies of modern history, after promising greater equality through "progressive taxation," than the growing iniquities due to the *downward equalization of the differential rate of exploitation* in which all of the capital system's state formations are deeply implicated with their actively pursued policies. And given the deepening structural crisis of the system, the role of

capital's state formations can only get worse on this score, as it will on the military and ecological plane.

In view of all these considerations a radical critique of the state in the Marxian spirit, with its far-reaching implications for the withering away of the state itself,[224] is a literally vital requirement of our time. The state as constituted on capital's antagonistic material ground cannot do other than protect the established social metabolic order, defending it at all cost, irrespective of the dangers for the future of humanity's survival. This determination represents a mountain-size obstacle that cannot be bypassed in attempting the much needed positive transformation of our conditions of existence. For under the unfolding circumstances of capital's irreversible structural crisis the state asserts and imposes itself as the mountain we *must* climb and conquer.

To be sure, this cannot be a leisurely recreational climb. The fundamental reason in this respect is that the grave problems arising from the political reality of the state, even when they assume the form of devastating wars, are only part of the challenge. The capital system has three interconnected pillars: capital, labor and the state. None of them can be done away with on its own. Nor can they be simply abolished or overthrown. The particular varieties of the capitalist state can be overthrown, and also restored, but not the state as such. The particular types of the historically given personifications of capital and wage labor can be juridically abolished, and restored, but not capital and labor as such, in their substantive sense of constitution as encountered in capital's social metabolic order. The sobering truth should be remembered that whatever can be overthrown can also be restored. And it has been done. The materiality of the state is deeply rooted in the antagonistic social metabolic ground upon which all of capital's state formations are erected. It is inseparable from the substantive materiality of both capital and labor. Only a combined view of their *threefold interrelationship* makes the state-legitimatory functions of the capital system intelligible.

Thus the problems now at stake on the plane of overall political decision-making as necessarily managed by the state cannot be solved without attending to their deepest social metabolic ground. And in that broader and more fundamental sense, it is not enough to *climb* the mountain in question, envisaging one-sidedly the overthrow of the given capitalist state as the answer to the destructiveness unfolding in every sphere of our social life under the conditions of capital's deepening structural crisis. Such problems are not amenable to a viable solution within their limited institutional terms of reference. The perilous mountain confronting humanity is the combined totality of capital's structural determinations which must be *conquered* in all of their deeply integrated dimensions. The state is, of course, a vital constituent in this set of interrelationships, in view of its now overpowering direct role in the necessary modality of overall decision making. Politics often played a key role in initiating major social

transformations in the past. That is bound to remain with us also in the foreseeable future. But the mountain in all of its dimensions must be—and can only be—*conquered* if the deep-seated structural antagonisms at the roots of the state's insoluble contradictions are brought under historically sustainable control.

12.1 The End of Liberal-Democratic Politics

LET US CONSIDER IN THE first place a most revealing quotation from a distinguished British prime minister, Sir Anthony Eden, who belonged to the Liberal Democratic wing of the Conservative Party and played an honorable role—together with Winston Churchill and Harold Macmillan—in opposing the Conservative "Appeasement of Hitler" in the 1930s.

No one should have any doubt about the accuracy of this quote, because it is fully authenticated by another prime minister of the same political orientation, Sir Edward Heath, who always proudly stressed that he took his political inspiration from "Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan,"[225] and on that ground he strongly opposed Margaret Thatcher's right-wing conservatism[226] to the end of his life. Indeed, at the time of entering Parliament Heath was one of the leading figures and Conservative Manifesto writers of the post–Second World War "One Nation Politics,"[227] which is today adopted and promoted in a most unprincipled way by the "New Labour Party."

The circumstances referred to in this letter are far more important than a particular historical event, no matter how dramatic such an event might be. For in this case we are confronted by a veritable line of demarcation that indicates the end of a long historical tradition and the collapse of its customary way of managing international conflicts with the methods of righteous conspiratorial diplomacy, pursued in the name of once genuinely held and successfully asserted but by now epochally outdated liberal-democratic ideology. The circumstances in question speak for themselves. They are as follows.

On 21 October 1955, shortly before the clamorous collapse of the Suez adventure, Conservative prime minister Anthony Eden told future prime minister Edward Heath—at the time the Chief Whip of his party, whose job was to "whip" their Members of Parliament into line for supporting the government—that his great political success in bringing about the imminent military invasion of Suez by Britain, France and Israel amounted to *"the highest form of statesmanship."*[228] Nothing less than that, as no doubt such outcome used to be considered and hailed in the past. The event was described by Edward Heath in his autobiography like this:

> I went into the Cabinet Room as usual shortly before Cabinet was due to start, and I found the Prime Minister standing by his chair holding a piece of paper. He was bright-eyed and full of life. The tiredness seemed suddenly to have disappeared. "We have got an agreement!" he exclaimed. "Israel has agreed to invade Egypt. We shall then send in our own forces, backed up by the French, to separate the contestants and regain the Canal." The Americans would not be told about the plan.[229]

As it turned out, the military adventure, prepared by the secret intrigue between Britain and its partners, humiliatingly failed as a result of American opposition under the presidency of General Eisenhower. Soon afterward Sir Anthony Eden had to give up politics altogether, with the customary excuse of "health reasons."

What Eden called *"the highest form of statesmanship"* was supposed to deserve its great political accolade because this infamous deal was prepared in the well-tried diplomatic way behind the stage, combined with "negotiations" for public consumption (for added secret diplomatic hypocrisy, conducted in New York) with the usual cynical pretense of avoiding precisely any military conflict over the issue of the Suez Canal. However, Eden and company made the big mistake of presuming to be able to impose their *fait accompli* as *"the highest form of statesmanship"* on the American administration. They were deluding themselves. For, as Paul Baran rightly emphasized in his pathbreaking book about postwar power relations, "The assertion of American supremacy in the 'free' world implied the reduction of Britain and France (not to speak of Belgium, Holland and Portugal) to the status of junior partners of American imperialism."[230]

In this way the historic line of demarcation, which asserted itself in the form of the humiliating collapse of the Suez war adventure, highlighted the naked reality of *power relations* that could no longer be embellished either by liberal-democratic wishful thinking or its hypocritical pretenses. The old ways could not work any longer, no matter which power tried to assume the role of imposing its internationally dominating aspirations on the rest of the world in the name of historically anachronistic liberal-democratic—i.e., only in *formal* terms democratic and universalistic—aspirations.

Naturally, despite the British conspiratorial failure nothing was actually solved at the time in *substantive* terms about the real causes of the Suez conflict and about some of the deep-seated contradictions inseparable from the once successful colonial domination of North Africa, which still continue to surface in our own time, even if in 1955 a new imperial power managed to call back to their senses the "junior partners of American imperialism." Nor should it be denied, in subservience to the new international power relations, that the historic line of demarcation in question also

highlighted that the *formal-democratic* pretenses of continued neocolonial domination, masquerading as liberal-democratic generosity and advancement, have become destructive *historical anachronisms*. The dramatic protests erupting not only in the form of the "Arab Spring" but *worldwide* call for fundamental *substantive* changes. And they call not simply for some readjustment *within* the framework of the established power relations, which would leave everything substantively in its place, as it happened in the past. Far from it. Indeed they call for a radical change in the *structural framework of the exercise of power itself*—including the modern state—and thereby for a change in substance from the hierarchically entrenched and enforced *domination* of the working classes by capital's social and political order to an alternative order of genuine self-determination.

To be sure, the once successfully prevailing varieties of liberal democratic state conceptions differed only with regard to their *internally* less authoritarian aspirations from the openly class-oppressive types of state domination. And they did that precisely in the interest of securing more general national support for their international—and even for their most ruthlessly empire-building—adventures. In terms of *external* domination they were perfectly happy to resort, by all means at their disposal, to the most violent imposition of their rule wherever they could do that as self-righteous *nation-states* and exploitative *colonizers.* This constituted the perverse *normality* of the antagonistic social order about which I argued a very long time ago:

> Growth and expansion are inner necessities of the capitalist system of production and when the local limits are reached there is no other way out except by violently readjusting the existing relation of forces. The relative stability of the leading capitalist countries—Britain, France, and the United States—was in the past inseparable from their ability to *export* the aggressiveness and the violence *internally generated* by their systems. Their weaker partners—Germany, Italy, and others—after the First World War found themselves in the middle of a grave social crisis and only the Fascist promise of a radical readjustment of the established relation of forces could bring a temporary solution acceptable to the bourgeoisie, through diverting the pressures of internal aggressiveness and violence into the channels of a massive preparation for a new world war. The small capitalist countries, on the other hand, simply had to subordinate themselves to one of the great powers and follow the policies dictated by them, even at the price of chronic instability.[231]

The difficult question for us is: How long can the perverse normality of an antagonistic social-economic and political order, with its irrepressible tendency toward the

global assertion of its rule, maintain its domination without destroying humanity itself? This is the size of the mountain we *must* climb and conquer.

One of the gravest problems in our time is the structural crisis of politics and the advocated solutions feasible from the vantage point of the existing states. Wherever we look and whatever remedies we are offered, their common defining characteristics always display the contradictions and the limitations of the historically constituted nation-states. This also happens to be the case when the claimed justification for the pursued policies is full of the rhetorics of universally commendable "democracy" and the unavoidable "globalization," coupled with the projection of answers in conformity to such determinations. At the same time, the claimed solutions are explicitly or by implication always based on the assumption that the historically long-established alienation of overall political decision-making, embodied in the modern states, must remain permanently the only feasible framework of overall societal nanagement.

As we know, Marx had a radically different view on this issue. His conception of the required socialist change of the social order is inseparable from his critique of the *state as such,* and not simply of the capitalist state. This approach is spelled out in the form of his advocacy and anticipation of not just the established state's major transformation but of its complete *withering away*. On this matter, just like on so many others, he offered a fundamentally different conception from even the greatest and most representative thinkers of the bourgeoisie.

The painful circumstance is that since the time when he formulated his views on the imperative of historically sustainable societal change, embracing in every way the whole of society, we could not see any sign of the state's withering away. Rather, we could witness the opposite. Yet this circumstance should not divert attention from the fundamental validity of Marx's advocacy. For the innermost determinations and destructive contradictions of the capital system in its deepening structural crisis today are intelligible and surmountable only if the modern state formations' overbearing role in the modality of all-embracing decision-making in the social metabolic process under the rule of capital is fully taken into account. No historically sustainable remedy is conceivable without that. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the continued historical significance of the Marxian theoretical framework hinges on the realizability (or not) of his concern with the withering away of the state.

In the course of modern history the intellectual giants of the bourgeoisie produced two truly great works on the state, which have never been equalled, let alone surpassed, since their creation. They are the *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes, conceived in the middle of the seventeenth century, and *The Philosophy of Right* by Hegel created in the first third of the nineteenth century. Naturally, neither of the two had the slightest interest in the projections of liberalism. Indeed, Hegel himself provided a

scathing critique of the liberal illusions[232] that fallaciously transfigured the realizability of *partial privileges* championed by their far from universal beneficiaries into totally untenable claims to *universal validity*. But of course the conceptual horizon of both of these great thinkers was circumscribed by their different, nevertheless very forceful, idealizations of the nation-state.

We have to return in due course to Hobbes and Hegel as the unrivaled peaks of the bourgeois theorizations of the state. At this point it should suffice to indicate a striking contrast. The contrast in question is clearly visible between the Hobbesian and Hegelian substantive theoretical assessment of the vital issues involved in evaluating the problems of the state, with all of their complexity and relevance to the functioning of the society of their own epoch, and in our time, the self-deluding disorientation of even some relatively progressive liberal-democratic politicians, like Sir Anthony Eden—not to mention their *neoliberal* and *neocon* colleagues—in the pursuit of policies capable of producing only disaster, and doing that in the name of *"the highest form of statesmanship."*

12.2 The "Withering Away" of the State?

MARX NEVER ABANDONED HIS view that the necessary radical change of capital's social metabolic order is inconceivable without fully overcoming the preponderant power of the established material reproductive system's state formations. Not even when the unfolding historical events pointed, dishearteningly, in the opposite direction.

It is equally important to stress that when he stressed the necessity of the state's "withering away"—and for the same reason of remaining faithful to fully acknowledging the requirements of *epochal* social and historical viability—he made it abundantly clear that to envisage the state's *abolition* by any form of conspiracy, or even by some more broadly based juridical *decree,* could only be a voluntaristic pipe dream. He never stopped insisting about that.

In this sense, the actual feasibility of the advocated radical societal change had to be conceived by Marx as arising from the historically sustainable unfolding of appropriate social processes, accounting for them in their tangible reality as they assert themselves in accordance with the dialectical mediatory transformation of their multifaceted objective and subjective requirements. The obstacles and massive constraints emanating from the existing relations of power as linked to the role of the state in the preservation and potential further development of the capital system as a whole, could not be simply wished out of existence, contrary to the way in which not

only his primarily anarchist opponents but even some of his longstanding friends and comrades projected the course of events and the strategies to be followed. This is why Marx tirelessly stressed in his pronouncements that foreshadowed the prospects of development on the terrain of political action and *all-embracing* decision-making—without which, and this must be firmly stressed, no conceivable social metabolic order could function at all—that the future not only *must* but *can only* bring with it the *withering away* of the state. Thus both terms of "can" and "must" had to remain pivotal points of any historically sustainable socialist orientation in this matter, whatever might be the temptations to exclude one or the other as we have experienced them up to the present time.

It is well known that, together with his plan to write a relatively short work on dialectics, one of the important projects Marx was hoping to accomplish, particularly in his early years, was a theoretical overview of the thorny problems of the state. However, as a result of his ever deeper engagement in the radical critique of political economy, which required a monumental effort—and even painfully health-consuming—this project more and more receded from his horizon.

But this is only a partial explanation, even if in strictly personal terms well understandable. Much more important was the objective historical development after the revolutionary wave of the late 1840s, which subsequently— following the serious economic crises of the late 1850s and the 1860s to which so much hope was attached by Marx and Engels with regard to the possibility of a fundamental societal change—resulted in the relative stabilization of capital's social order in the European "little corner of the world."[233] Moreover, the European economic and political crises of the late 1850s and the 1860s had brought with them not only the social explosion manifesting itself in the 1871 Paris Commune but the military defeat and savage repression of the participants in that Commune, and simultaneously the strengthening of bourgeois class solidarity against the "common enemy."[234]

Inevitably, all this had a major impact on the prospects of development of the working-class movement with which Marx was also on personal terms, as a militant intellectual and the political leader of the movement's organizational articulation, the First International, closely associated. The ongoing developments took a turn in the direction of the particular working-class movements beginning to occupy increasing political institutional ground in their national setting, but this happened at the price of abandoning some of their earlier revolutionary tenets for the sake of operating within the bourgeois class-oriented legal framework of their capitalist state.

THIS PROBLEM PRESENTED ITSELF in a most acute form in Germany with the Gotha Program, which was written for the purpose of promoting the unification

of the radical wing of the movement with the opportunistic accommodators of the German working class. The "Eisenachers" constituted the radical wing of the working class, whereas the "Lassalleans"—whose inspirer was for quite a long time "probably in secret understanding with Bismarck," as Marx correctly suggested in 1865[235]—were trying to integrate the class movement into the established state regulatory structure. To counter that Marx produced in April (or early May) 1875 a devastating *Critique of the Gotha Program,* which pointed out not only the inner contradictions of this particular program but also the disastrous prospects for the future of the socialist movement if it adopted the strategy foreshadowed by such unprincipled unification. But all this was to no avail and the fateful unification went ahead.

Under the given historical circumstances political accommodation prevailed, inducing the working-class participants to "follow the line of least resistance" in their relations to the ruling order. This course of development emerged thanks also to the newly opened-up prospects for capital-expansion favored by imperialistic developments, with Bismarck's Germany as a most powerful contestant in the international arena. Understandably, there could be no question at all of the state's *withering away* for a long time to come, even if its necessity had to be reasserted, as indeed it has been done by Marx in his *Critique.* The objective trends of development favored opening up a road to a more aggressive reassertion of capital's power, paralyzing the principled socialist aspirations of the working class movement for a painfully long time to come, as perceived by Marx. Significantly, he concluded the*Critique of the Gotha Program* with these resignatory words: *"Dixi et salvavi animam meam"*—I said it and saved my soul.

Naturally, Marx's radical critique was hidden from public view by the leadership of the new party for sixteen years. When in the end it was allowed publication, two decades after the Paris Commune—and even then only as a result of the forceful intervention by Engels, threatening to reveal it himself if his request continued to be denied—there was no way of reversing the fateful course of events. By that time things had gone too far. Revealingly, Engels himself insisted in 1875, in his letter to August Bebel, who belonged to the Eisenacher wing of the party at the time of its unification, that the road that was bound to be followed by the advocated reorientation of the German working class inevitably meant that "the principle that the workers' movement is an *international movement* is, to all intents and purposes, *completely disavowed.*"[236] The grave implications of this prophetic judgment for the movement being trapped by a tragically chosen blind alley were clamorously confirmed at the outbreak of the First World War when German Social Democracy ignominiously identified itself with the imperialist war adventure of their state.

Marx always clearly emphasized that the great historical transformation of the future is inconceivable without the sustained revolutionary work of what he

called the *"practical critical agency,"* that is, the organized international working class. However, more or less simultaneously with the negative impact of the Gotha Program in Germany, and in the same disheartening way, the First International also went through a major crisis and had to cease functioning in 1875. To theorize under such conditions about the proximity of the "withering away of the state" would be, of course, very naive indeed, to say the least. Imperialist developments in the last two or three decades of the nineteenth century put on the order of the day the ever more aggressive confrontations for the radical redefinition of the *relations of power* among the dominant international forces. And that meant not the weakening but, on the contrary, the imperative of *strengthening* of their states.

It goes without saying that the immense destructive consequences of the unfolding imperialist developments and their corresponding military implications, which had to result in due course even in two *global conflagrations,* and on the economic plane the deep-seated and ever more dominant *monopolism,* as the socioeconomic corollary of such transformations, were beyond Marx's horizon. The proper theorization of the new imperialism, with its necessary impact on the nature of capital's state formations, was left to the age of Lenin. And even then it had to be affected by transient historical specificities, carrying with them somewhat optimistic overtones by defining imperialism, with regard to its several lethally warring state antagonists, as the "last phase of capitalism." The subsequent formation of *global hegemonic imperialism,* with the United States of America as its overwhelmingly dominant power, was constituted only after the Second World War and so far also succeeded in managing its affairs without a global collision of the potentially contending states of the global capital system. Moreover, another radically different attempt at controlling capital's antagonistic modality of social metabolic reproduction, which appeared in history well beyond Marx's horizon, was the Soviet-type economic and political system, with the *politically regulated* maximal extraction of surplus labor under the rule of its state formation, in contrast to the *primarily economic* extraction of surplus labor as *surplus value.*

In view of all these considerations we may recall that "since capital in Marx's lifetime was very far from its present-day articulation as a truly global system, equally, its overall political command structure as a system of globally interconnected states was far less visible in its precise mediatedness. It is therefore by no means surprising that Marx never succeeded in sketching even the bare outlines of his theory of the state, although the latter was assigned a very precise and important place in his projected system as a whole. Today the situation is quite different, in that the global system of capital, under a variety of very different (indeed contradictory) forms, finds its political equivalent in the totality of interdependent state- and

inter-state relations. This is why the elaboration of a Marxist theory of the state is both possible and necessary today. Indeed, it is vitally important for the future of viable socialist strategies."[237]

12.3 The Wishful Limitation of State Power

BUT CAN WE ASSERT with confidence that there is a proper Marxist theory of the state in the more recent literature?

Let me quote on this issue Norberto Bobbio, who left us a most valuable body of theoretical work on the law, conceived by him in the best tradition of the original, and in its own time undoubtedly progressive, liberalism. Moreover, Bobbio as a scholar was not only a passionate anti-fascist, he also professed deep social reformatory sympathies for, and consistently voiced solidarity with, the gravely disadvantaged in capitalist society. This is clearly testified by many of his enlightened interventions in postwar political debates and by his legislative role as Senator for Life under the presidency of Sandro Pertini, in the old Italian Socialist Party that was led for a long time by Pietro Nenni, well before its corruption by Berlusconi and its disintegration under Bettino Craxi. I always considered Norberto Bobbio a very dear friend and a great ally of our cause.

Bobbio's answer to the question: "Is There a Marxist Theory of the State?"—the title of one of his prominent articles—is an emphatic no. He states that view at times with forceful sarcasm, as, for instance, when he comments on the debate between John Lewis and Louis Althusser:

> Lewis has written that "man makes history." Althusser unleashes a pamphlet at him, maintaining that such is not the case. "Ce sont les masses qui font l'histoire." I challenge anyone to find a social scientist outside the Marxist camp who can seriously pose a problem of this type. [Bobbio adds in a footnote:] Of the two assertions, Lewis's at least has the merit of being clear, even though general, and of having a precise polemical aim: that history is made by men means that it is not made by God, providence, etc. Althusser's claim, on the other hand, which pretends to be a scientific proposition, is likewise general but unclear. Indeed, one need not be an admirer of analytic philosophy to consider the proposition meaningless, since to give it meaning would require defining what the masses are, what "making" means, and what history is—an extremely simple undertaking![238]

Naturally, the last few words are meant in biting irony. Bobbio is the last person to deny the major theoretical difficulties involved in the satisfactory solution of such problems. If anything, he tends to argue in the opposite sense, putting the stress on the overwhelming difficulties. In any case Bobbio is also right in stating that some Italian Marxists who claim that there is a fully worked out theory of the state in Marx's writings continue to repeat 20 pages of his text—from the *Civil War in France,* as Umberto Cerroni does it in his *Teoria politica e socialismo*—and fail to account for the reality of the state. In his highly popular book, *Quale socialismo?,*[239] Bobbio offers the same negative stance about the debated problems of socialism—in the form of a multiplicity of unanswered concluding questions[240]—as in his article from *Telos* quoted above.

Nevertheless, Bobbio's appreciation of Marx as a dialectical thinker cannot be denied. This is clearly visible in a major article published in one of his most important collection of essays, *Da Hobbes a Marx*.[241] In an article of this volume, "La dialettica in Marx" and first published in 1958, he singles out a vital question concerning the relation of Hegelian Logic to Hegel's theory of the state. In the spirit of his own preference for the liberal democratic conception of the state Bobbio quotes Marx in full agreement:

> Logic does not serve to prove the state but the state serves to prove Logic." In this way Marx describes in fact the process of mystification of reality, which consists in overturning an empirical position into a metaphysical proposition.[242]

At the same time in a somewhat conflicting way Bobbio comments that "in my view what counts about Marxism in the history of thought is the materialistic theory of history."[243] Here, too, despite agreeing with Marx in his critique of Hegel, and in that sense qualifying his sympathy for the Marxian dialectical view of history while rejecting the dialectic of nature, there is no sign of Bobbio approving even in principle the Marxian conception of the state, although in this 1958 essay his reasoning is spelled out on the basis of debatable methodological considerations that, in view of our limitations here, cannot be discussed now.

HOWEVER, THIS ISSUE GOES well beyond a particular historical controversy. It also highlights a more fundamental theoretical problem. For even if we agree with Bobbio about the absence of a proper Marxist theory of the state up to the present time, there is something very problematical with regard to his own general position, which he shares with the liberal tradition in general. It is highly relevant in this connection that Bobbio firmly *asserts* the nonexistence of the Marxist theory of the state

but never investigates *why* it does not exist, if that is the case. Indeed, Bobbio simply *stipulates*—both in the way in which he argues his own case and also by fully siding with the liberal-democratic conception of the state—that the Marxist theory of the state not only *does not exist* but also that it *cannot exist* at all. And in that way there is no need for asking the crucially important question of *why,* because the *assertion* and *stipulation*—from the ground of *assuming* the liberal-democratic state's permanent validity—settles the issue as a matter of course.

This position is firmly expressed in Bobbio's categorical rejection of *any* alternative to *representative democracy,* which means of course also the corresponding dismissal of Rousseau. Naturally, the rejection of the Marxian idea of the *withering away of the state* is a necessary corollary of all that. Bobbio in fact adopts Adam Smith's views on the required limitations of state power, in sharp contrast to Hegel's idea of the ideal universality of the fully adequate *"ethical state."* Paradoxically, in unacknowledged conflict with some of his own tenets, Bobbio embraces the position of even the conservative wing of the liberal democratic theory represented by Luigi Einaudi,[244] the first postwar president of the Italian Republic. Not surprisingly, in this approach the question of *why* is never asked also about the objective constitutive grounds, and consequently the future viability (or not), of the liberal democratic state itself.

Yet, without a *historical/genetic* account and prognosis of past, present and future there can be *no validly sustainable* theory of the state, indeed of any state. There can be only its *assumption* and—with regard to the future—the more or less peremptory *assertion* of its permanence, complemented by a Theory—or Philosophy—of the *Law.* Such *Theory of the Law,* represented as the *Theory (or Philosophy) of the State,* can explain only the *modality* of the *given* legal framework's *operation*—like, for instance, the parliamentary functioning of "representative democracy"—and do that in a rather idealized form. This is the case even when the believers of the liberal approach are willing to advocate to "restrain the state from excessive interference with civil society," in general with very little, if any, success in such efforts.

This connection indicates a major concern that is as a rule obscured or even completely ignored. For the investigation of the problems of the state is often *identified with,* or—in more precise terms—*reduced to* theories of *Law* and *Right.* In German, as we know, the same word, *Recht,* covers both Law and Right. In fact, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is also his *Philosophy of the State* and sometimes this work is translated as one and sometimes as the other. The serious trouble in this respect is that identifying the state with the Law and the Right fundamentally distorts and apologetically rationalizes and justifies the actually existing *reality of the state* by projecting—explicitly or by implication—the *ideal coincidence* of rightful Law with the far from self-evidently unquestionable coincidence of "The Law" with "The State." For the actually existing

state—including of course the modern capitalist "democratic state"—is characterized not only by *Law* and *Right* but also by utterly destructive *Lawlessness* and thereby by the diametrical opposite of *rightful law*.

Under some circumstances of particularly acute crises this is even recognized by liberal legal theoreticians. But even when it is done, this embarrassing admission happens in a characteristically one-sided way, without examining the questionable assumptions of the advocated liberal framework itself despite its crisis. A very good example is a politically well-meaning but theoretically rather doubtful book by Philippe Sands, titled *Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules*.[245] What makes Sand's book on recent grave violations of international law quite inadequate is that the author simply postulates the *exceptionality* of the state's lawlessness, without investigating the underlying *causes* that make *state lawlessness* itself the *recurrent rule* at times of *major crises*. When Philippe Sands tries to explain what he calls "one of the *great enigmas* of modern British political life"[246]—which in this case, far from enigmatically, asserted itself in the British prime minister's total subservience to the unlawful military adventures of American imperialism under President George W. Bush in Afghanistan and in Iraq, with regard to international law exposed and honorably condemned by the author of *Lawless World,* Sands is willing to seriously entertain as an explanatory idea Blair's "idealism" and his "well-intentioned" attitude to international politics.[247] But of course state lawlessness condemned by some liberal legal theorists in the name of the law continues unabated in the international arena when Bush and Blair vacate their seats in favor of their successors. And there is nothing *enigmatic* about that.

12.4 The Assertion of Might-as-Right

THE DEEPEST UNDERLYING TRUTH and causal determination of these matters—valid for *all states*, including the customarily idealized "modern democratic state"—is that *"right is might"* because *"might is right,"* and not the other way round, as groundlessly postulated even by some genuine believers in liberal theory. Naturally, the particular *modality* of asserting, through state legislation, the presumed imperative for imposing and legitimating *might-as-right* changes historically. But the fundamental determinations remain the same for as long as the state itself exists in *any* form.

This is true also of the particular *phases*—changing "back and forth" from time to time, of the modern capitalist state, e.g. liberal-democratic / Bonapartist / colonial imperialist / Nazi-Fascist / neocon dominated, etc. Moreover, the post-revolutionary capital system also produced its historically varying phases of more or less directly

authoritarian state formations, from Stalin to Khruschev and from Gorbachev and Yeltsin to Putin, or the forms named "Peoples' Democracies" from Rákosi to Gomulka and Kádár, or in another setting, the state regulatory forms under Tito. Naturally, the historically distinct Chinese varieties, from the time of Mao to the present, must also be remembered in this context.

Nor did Marx entertain any illusion about the character of the feasible transitional state formation concerning the inherited "might-as-right." He envisaged it with the explicitly stated orientation of turning "might-into-right." Marx made that very clear by talking about the transitory *dictatorship of the proletariat* precisely in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* while forcefully stressing the necessary withering away of the state.

Max Weber's *state-apologetic* formula that assigns *"the monopoly of violence"* to the state—often hailed as a great insight—is in fact a shallow pseudo-explanation and a cynical evasion of the real problem. It is on par with another profundity by Weber that grotesquely asserts that the state is the "creation of Occidental Jurists." Neither of the two propositions has even a minimal explanatory value ragarding the conditions under which the modern state formation comes into being and historically changes its forms from the institution of consensually liberal-democratic measures at a certain stage of development to the adoption of openly dictatorial rules of control.[248] The serious problems of *why* the state *must resort* to violence, when it does, and even more important, *how far* a system of societal management like that exercized by the alienated decision making processes of politics can be historically sustained, remain complete *"mysteries"* (or "enigmas," as naively suggested by Sands, quoted in the above section) even when the ludicrous Weberian suggestion is propagandized that purports to explain the antagonistic reality of the state through the birth pangs of the brains of more or less drunken Occidental judges.

IN THE PAST THE self-serving idealization of the liberal democratic state relegated the problem of state violence to the domain of the *"despotic state."* This continued to be done later when some liberal state theorists were willing to acknowledge violence (of course, strictly marginal violence) in their own states as "aberration," occasional executive "excessiveness," emergency "exceptionality," or administrative "failure," and the like, all expected to be properly corrected by the future "state restraints" wishfully projected by liberal political theory.

Under the impact of sharpening contradictions and antagonisms, in the twentieth century the notion of *"despotic state"* was "modernized" in the form of *"the totalitarian state."* This definition functioned as a convenient but rather absurd umbrella term under which so many thoroughly different—not to say diametrically opposite—determinations could be lumped together, without explaining anything, yet

proclaimed and sustained through the adopted definitional/tautological self-evidence of pretendedly "descriptive" assertion. Moreover, the definitionally established claim to self-evidence also supposed to be a *fundamental critique* of the denounced "totalitarian" state forms and at the same time, even more problematically, the equally self-evident justification of the position assumed by the "anti-totalitarian" theorists who defined themselves in terms of their circularly self-commending dismissal of what they simply rejected.

In Hegel's philosophical system the problem of the *despotic state* was solved by the "Absolute Spirit" unfolding and disclosing itself in terms of world historical development by confining oriental despotism irretrievably to the past, and bringing to light the true "ethical state" as *"the image and actuality of reason."*[249] That is, World Spirit was said to establish the real kingdom of *Recht* in the fullest dual sense of the term, covering both the State and morally commendable Right. But of course this could not mean the end of violence. For Hegel, to the credit of his intellectual consistency, simultaneously maintained both the ideality and unalterable actuality of the *nation-state,* which meant for him the morally justified acceptance of *war* as the ultimate guarantor of the idealized nation-state's *sovereignty*.

Naturally, in the philosophy of Hobbes there could be no question of the supersession of violence. Far from it. Indeed in any theory of politics oriented toward the nation-state, the standpoint of such state can only be adopted with *consistency* by the theoreticians involved if the nation-state's necessary implications for *war*—in view of the potentially most destructive antagonistic *interstate* relations that must be carried to their logical conclusion—are also accepted. That can be opposed only by the wishful Kantian *Sollen*—his projected "ought-to-be"—of the postulated, but on capital's social ground never realizable, *"perpetual peace,"* dismissed with biting sarcasm by Hegel.

IN TRUTH THE REAL problem is not *generic violence* but quite tangible, socially grounded and sustained *state lawlessness* that regularly surfaces and asserts itself as a matter of *systemic crisis determinations.* The question of violence, no matter how grave, is only a part of the more general and also much more fundamental problem. The pretended "value-free" descriptive assertion about the state's monopoly of violence is only a circular triviality at the claimed descriptive level. In fact, the unacknowledged purpose of the Weberian pronouncement is the apologetic *legitimation* and *justification* of the capitalist state and its *lawlessness* as violence. This could not be further removed from the author's claims to *Wert-Freiheit* (value-freedom). In its proper meaning the Weberian assertion states that even the violence of the state is legitimate because the state itself cannot be *held responsible* for its lawlessness and violence by anyone, hence its *monopoly.*

However, on closer inspection such a proposition turns out to be not simply vacuous but also utterly false on two counts. First, because at times—like the Nürnberg war criminal trials, when former power relations suffer a well-deserved shock and reversal—the state's postulated *exemption from responsibility* is emphatically *and rightly* denied, with obvious consequences for the commanding personnel of the guilty state. And second, because the pretended "monopoly of violence" in its terms of reference to exemption from being held responsible for the act in question applies also to the *madman* who kills another human being, and receives as the implicit acknowledgment of his own Weberian "monopoly of violence" the judgment of being sent to a medical institution or "lunatic asylum," instead of being executed, or jailed for life in a prison.

Thus talking about the monopoly of violence, apart from being factually false as a claimed exclusivistic monopoly, is also an ideologically self-serving blatant evasion of the essential problem. That is to say, it is the state-apologetic evasion of the vital fact that what we are really concerned with is *state lawlessness*—even when it is not manifest in a violent form but, rather, as state-promoted fraudulence in legally protected and indeed legally facilitated tax evasion, for instance—and not generic violence, which can assume a virtually infinite number of more or less directly hurtful forms. Evidently, the prevalence of violence in state practices can be more or less intense, according to the changing circumstances. But the changing modality of state violence should be the subject of serious historical investigation, instead of obfuscating the matter with the state's generic identification with its decreed monopoly of violence.

IT IS WORTH QUOTING here at some length Ernest Barker's views on the state and law. Tellingly, a former professor of political science in the University of Cambridge, Barker is still part of the general university curriculum.

We find in his theory of the state a most revealing idealization of both the state and the law, by asserting their ideal unity in terms of a mysteriously proclaimed notion of "purpose." This is how Barker presents that view:

> Each national society is a *unity.* . . . But each society is also a *plurality.* It is a rich web of contained *groups*—religious and educational; professional and occupational; some for pleasure and some for *profit;* some based on neighbourhood and some on some *other affinity;* all dyed by the national colour and yet all (or most of them) with the capacity and the instinct, for associating themselves with similar *groups* in other national societies, and thus entering into some form of international connection. . . . The state, we may say, is a national society which has turned itself into a legal association, or a juridical

> organization, by virtue of a legal act and deed called a *constitution,* which is henceforth the norm and standard (and therefore the "Sovereign") of such association or organization. . . . Constituted by and under this constitution, and thus created by a legal act (or series of acts), the state exists to perform the legal and political *purpose* for which it was constituted.[250]

The word conspicuously absent from such political science and its theory of the state is *class*. In its stead, we have the universal vaguery of "groups." The result of the adoption of this tendentiously "lowest common denominator"—through which the capitalist class exploiters of the class of labor appear as members of a "voluntary association interested in profit" and the laborers do not appear at all—is the declamatory genericity concerning "groups" that are supposed to make up the "national society." And then, of course, we are also presented with the customary circularity of such political theories in Barker's attempt to define "the constitution of the state"—upon which so much else is supposed to hinge—through its "constitution," begging thereby the question in the service of social and political apologetics. Thus we are also told a few pages further on that

> the *state* is essentially *law,* and *law is the essence of the state*. The state is essentially law in the sense that it exists in order to secure a *right order* of relations between its *members,* expressed in the form of declared and enforced rules. Law as a system of declared and enforced rules, is the essence of the state in the same sort of sense as his [the political philosopher's] words and acts are the essence of man.[251]

Barker's only concern is to abstractly postulate the wishful reality of the "law-observing-state," namely British law idealized by him, in contrast to the authoritarian German/Italian/Fascist state. But, as frequently happens, this approach is not at all interested in a critical analysis of the origin, nature and transformation of the idealized "law-abiding state" that it circularly assumes, on the shaky ground of the temporarily established relation of forces.

The underlying intent and practical usefulness of treating the state as a "group," like the other "groups," is manifest in Barker's way of *legitimating* the state in his discourse on the *"state's purpose."* These are his words:

> It [the state] is a group or association; and it stands on the same footing as other groups or associations. Its essence or being consists in *its purpose,* just as the essence or being of all other groups consists in their purpose. Not only is

> purpose the essence of the groups contained in the state; it is also the essence of the state itself. . . . The characteristic of the purpose of the state is that it is the *specific purpose of law.* Other purposes, so far as they concern or affect this prupose, must necessarily be squared with it. This is the same as to say that other groups, so far as they hold or assume a legal position, must necessarily be adjusted to the legal group which we call the state. They are not thereby adjusted to its *will:* they are adjusted to its *purpose* which is *law.* The state would be failing to attain its purpose and thereby to discharge its *duty,* if it failed to secure such adjustment. But the adjustment is not a matter of discretion, and it is not absolute: it is controlled by the purpose of the state, and it is relative to that purpose. To reject the theory of the real personality of groups is not to fall into worship of the omnicompetent or absolute state. It is to find the essence of the state in its purpose of law, and *to subject it to its purpose*, just as we find the essence of other groups also in their *particular* purpose, and just as we make them too the servants and the ministers of their purpose.[252]

In this way the wishfully idealized "purpose" reveals its apologetic substance when Barker asserts that the state's *purpose* is also its morally commendable *duty* to *enforce the necessary adjustments* to its own "purpose." Accordingly, pseudo-democratically opposing disembodied "purpose" to actually operative *will,* as adopted by Ernest Barker—while insisting on the *duty* of the state to *enforce conformity*—amounts to no more than apologetic sophistry. At the same time, Barker's talk about *"subjecting the state to its purpose"* is utterly vacuous. At best it is only a wishful collection of words without practicable content. For who is going to lawfully*"subject* the state to its purpose" when the whole discourse is centered on the necessary—and in Barker's own words constitutionally sanctified—subjection of "all groups and associations" to the state's overbearing "purpose," legitimated by him in the name of the categorically asserted *identity of the state and law* defined as their mutual "essence"?

THE TROUBLE WITH ALL such apologetic misrepresentations of the state and law is that the difficult question of justifying the actually prevailing relationship between *might and right* under capital's state formations is either avoided or more or less consciously taken for granted as the right and proper way of managing societal interchange in all conceivable systems of overall political decision-making. Consequently, the thorny issue of *state lawlessness* cannot even be considered, no matter how grave. The mere assumption of *might* as the more or less implicitly but always arbitrarily decreed legitimate ground of *right itself* justifies everything by definition. It justifies even the crudest and most violent suppression of *internal dissent* and its search for

some viable alternative, not to mention the wars pursued against the *"external enemy"* in the interest of temporarily exporting the accumulated internal antagonisms of the established social metabolic order.

Moreover, by treating might-as-right in this apologetic self-justifying way, the champions of such state-legitimatory ideology also turn into a complete *mystery* how and *why* the postulated and by them morally commended "law-abiding state" *becomes* under determinate historical circumstances the kind of "German/Italian/Fascist state" criticized by Barker . The political theorists who assume might as the self-evident legitimate ground of right cannot possibly have an answer to such an embarrassing question. They either close their eyes to it, ignoring painful historical evidence, or—worse still—they come to terms with it when such developments take place while maintaining their pretenses to political enlightenment, as Max Weber does. In this respect it is by no means accidental that Weber as a "man for all seasons"—notwithstanding his liberal claims—could be an enthusiastic military defender of the aggressive interests of German imperialism during the First World War, and could find himself in full agreement with the proto-fascist General Ludendorff's cult of "the leader," also in the aftermath of that war, as quoted in endnote 248.

The necessary relationship is between *state lawlessness* as such and the assertion of *might-as-right* as the practical modality of overall political decision-making under the rule of capital. The historically given state formations of the capital system must assert themselves as the effective *enforcers* of the rules required for the maintenance of the established societal reproductive order. Naturally, "the law" must be defined and modified accordingly, so as to suit the changing power relations and the corresponding modifications of the fundamental antagonisms that are inseparable from capital's metabolism of societal reproduction. That way of imposing state legitimacy is at times feasible in tune with "constitutional rules" and at other times only through the suspension and violation of all such rules. Historical development decides which of the two must prevail under the given—and as a rule-changing—circumstances. Hence it is totally arbitrary to postulate either ideal constitutionality or its necessary suspension or abolition as the *norm*. The two of them go—or, rather, *come and go*—together, with bewildering regularity.

Since, however, *might-as-right* must always take the upper hand, at least as the "reserve powers" of idealized sovereignty, and it must do so even under the least conflictual circumstances of any "trouble-free democratic golden age," any postulate of the "law-abiding state"—or of the liberal-democratic formulations of the same idea as "state restraint" in relation to "civil society"—can be no more than unadulterated fiction. Thus *state lawlessness,* as the necessary assertion of *might-as-right* under the historically changing circumstances of always self-legitimatory determinations, is

inseparable from the reality of the state as such. In other words, might-as-right and state lawlessness are in a sense synonymous, in view of their *necessary correlation*. What is contingent in this necessary relationship is the form or modality—i.e., the nonviolent or, on the contrary, even in the most brutal way violent—assertion of the state-legitimatory imperative of might-as-right.

A very good example of the formally changing but in its substance continuing relationship between state lawlessness and might-as-right in British history was provided by the most authoritarian assertion of state power in the name of the "defense of democracy" under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher during the miners' strike of 1984. The secret state documents released in January 2014 in conformity to the "thirty years' rule" of legalized concealment made it very clear that the British government not only systematically lied in the media about the contested issues, denying the already adopted secret policy of closing 75 coal pits and the necessary mass unemployment resulting from that decision, but also resorted to the most unlawful action of state violence against the miners and their supporters, cynically violating its own constitutionally regulated statutes. Margaret Thatcher's government ordered the police force to intervene in an unlawful and violent way against the miners on a prolonged strike, thereby violating not only the professed democratic rules in general but, paradoxically, the rules constitutionally laid down to the police for the purpose of ideologically palatable "democratic law-enforcement." This course of events had to be imposed under the circumstances despite the fact that the police force wanted to conform to its constitutionally prescribed rules and statutes. Naturally, the police wanted to do that not for defending constitutionality but in the interest of maintaining a more easily manageable relationship with the public at large, instead of exposing itself to being the party directly responsible for the bitterly acrimonious adversariality resulting from the action dictated unlawfully, and indeed unconstitutionally, by the "democratic" government.

The state, with its power of lawlessness, was *above the law* in the first place, thanks to the self-legitimatory reality of might-as-right. Otherwise it could not act unlawfully even over above its own police force, violating the relevant constitutional statutes when it suited the changing circumstances. Being *above the law*—not as an "aberration" but by the capital state's always given inherent determination, revealed only at times of major conflict—is the fundamental meaning of *incorrigible state lawlessness.* The state's incorrigible lawlessness resides in its innermost constitution as sovereign *arbiter* over the law, and is therefore *above the law.* Everything else is consequential or secondary to that, including the apologetically hailed technicality of the "separation of powers," depending on whether the enforcement of the objective implications of being above the law calls for violent or nonviolent modalities of action. "States

of emergency" can be decreed whenever the conditions of intensifying crises make such courses of action the "proper way," even without any military involvement. The ideologically embellished cynical lies spelled out in the name of the "defense of democracy" should not be confused with the reality itself. In state practice the vainly pursued justification of the unjustifiable adds insult to injury by first acting in a most unlawful/unconstitutional way against the miners, and then denounces them—in Margaret Thatcher's own words—as *"the enemy within."*

This is not a "personal aberration" nor "excessive interference with civil society," as traditional liberal-democratic theories of the state would argue. What matters here is the perverse *objective continuity* between being above the law, thanks to the state's structurally secured position, and its ability to decree "states of emergency"—including even the most authoritarian modes of action—in the name of the "defense of democracy." The only way to make this kind of development intelligible at all is to underline the structurally determined inseparability of might-as-right and state lawlessness asserting itself, of all things, in the name of "the rule of law." The same goes for the slippery road starting from the claimed "defense of democracy," proceeding through the proclamation of "states of emergency," and going all the way to the recurrent imposition of dictatorial forms of government, as *organically* linked to one another. Transformations of this kind can be made intelligible only on the same ground of the structurally determined inseparability of might-as-right and state lawlessness as the self-legitimatory privilege of the state. This is why we can ignore only at our peril the prevalence of state lawlessness—often even constitutionally sanctified in theories of the state as such—as the overbearing reality of the state, irrespective of how violent or not the form in which it manifests itself is under the changing historical circumstances.

However, it is an equally important consideration in this respect that even when state lawlessness assumes a most violent, catastrophically destructive form, the contradiction manifest in it could not be explained simply with reference to the *state alone*. The state may well be the executor of such violence, going as far as a massively destructive *global war,* but it cannot be identified as the deepest *cause* of such events *in and by itself*.

In our societies the causally determining ground of violence is the social metabolic order of *the capital system itself*. The state, to be sure, is an *integral part* of this system as a mode of social metabolic control, and it functions as the active agency of both *state law* and *state lawlessness* in the service of the overall maintenance of the established social metabolic order. The state's responsibility in promoting and enforcing the *objective imperatives* of the capital system is *colossal* but by no means *exclusive*. This qualification is required not for exempting the state from its responsibility but, on the

contrary, precisely for making possible a genuine and historically sustainable *critique* of the state. For without *disentangling* so many things on this terrain it is impossible to define the strategic lines of *what is to be done* as well as *what can be done* in terms of the *reality of the state* as an integral part of the capital system.

12.5 Eternalizing Assumptions of Liberal State Theory

WHAT NEEDS TO BE *disentangled* is not simply a question of highlighting some characteristic theoretical distortions and their underlying motivations. It is much more difficult than that, because it requires *practical disentangling* through a radical change of society. For the revealing theoretical representations of these vital issues of social life in the annals of social theory and philosophy are firmly rooted in the social realities themselves. The theories in question articulate the underlying social interests and values, in accordance with the standpoint of the *ruling order* which their ideologically motivated authors adopt even in their partial criticisms of what they consider corrigible in the given order. Thus the necessity of *disentangling* itself, in the interest of historically sustainable transformation, and the structurally entrenched difficulties encountered in attempting to do that, clearly indicate the *practical embeddedness* of the problems themselves as they have historically arisen, and have become strengthened, even encrusted, by the force of social inertia.

At this point of our engagement with the subject only a brief reference can be made to what requires, with regard to these thorny issues, a fuller critical analysis in due course. For a whole range of problems must be confronted that not only *did* but also *had to* remain entangled in bourgeois theories of the state, even in the greatest of them. To name a few, it is enough to think of the relationship between right and the state, right and the law, the state and the law, right and might, and its often mystifyingly camouflaged corollary, might asserted as right, at one level, and the spurious claims to self-evidency in the advocated classifications, legislations and codifications at another.

Moreover, the objective historical changes that result in contrasting theoretical transformations must be always born in mind. For what is a great theoretical accomplishment in its own time in the conceptions of Hobbes and Hegel, for instance, and regarding their limitations also happens to be understandable—though by no means justifiable as a permanent solution to the problems at stake, as often claimed by their authors—and becomes extremely problematical at a later stage. This is because at a significantly altered later stage some newly articulated structural antagonisms in historical reality bring forward their carriers in the form of self-assertive social subjects

and thereby foreshadow the likelihood—or at least the practical feasibility—of a qualitatively different solution. At some point in time this includes as directly relevant to us the hegemonic alternative to capital's social metabolic order embodied in the historical force of labor.

In this sense, understandably, the customarily hidden or apologetically rationalized contradiction between right and the law, or the actually existent state and its claimed enforcement of right, or indeed for that matter the necessary relationship between might and right, could not represent any problem whatsoever to Thomas Hobbes under his conditions of historical development. But of course the same kind of historical exemption could not apply to Hegel who, at a considerably later stage, could not help confronting the prohibitively difficult conflicts at the roots of these issues. And he did that with utmost integrity, no matter how problematical his adopted stance had to be in view of the changing class relations themselves. He theorized them without evading the challenging reality of the new historical antagonisms as he could perceive them from the standpoint that could remain in tune with his own class horizon.

Accordingly, in his grandiose scheme of things Hegel produced—in the form of an unintended swan song—the last great bourgeois philosophy of the state. He did that by depicting the advocated "ethical state" as the rationally accomplished supersession of capitalist "civil society" (while in his own way not only acknowledging but *preserving* its contradictions) as an integral part, and even as the climax, of the unfolding world historical process.[253] He called that process a *Theodicaea: "a justification of the ways of God."*[254] In this way Hegel projected the historically fully adequate realization of the *state as such* as *"Spirit's perfect embodiment."*[255]

IN MUCH THE SAME historical period as the completion of Hegel's philosophy of the state and right, the contrast to the Hegelian vision could not be greater in the conception of a strange but, in his own field of study, certainly most remarkable English utilitarian legal theorist, John Austin.

In his case so much—far too much—had to be taken for granted as unquestionably self-evident on the terrain of the allegedly fully legitimate political relations, in his view to be simply classified by jurisprudence, and therefore in no need of further analysis and, heaven forbid, critical explanation. In that sense Austin could conveniently relegate some of the thorniest of theoretical difficulties and political contradictions of legal theory to the domain of linguistic considerations, "explained" by Austin as mere "ambiguities" and "confusions." Not surprisingly, Austin has been warmly acknowledged as a most distinguished ancestor to a characteristic approach to the problems of jurisprudence in the twentieth century, favored by some leading analytic/linguistic

philosophers, like Oxford professor H. L. A. Hart. In this spirit, with regard to the issues of Right and the Law as discussed in legal philosophy in Austin's time under the German term "*Recht*," this English liberal/utilitarian thinker insisted that

> since the strongest and wariest of minds are often ensnared by ambiguous words, their confusion of those disparate objects is a venial error. Some, however, of these German writers are guilty of a grave offence against good sense and taste. They thicken the mess which that confusion produces, with a misapplication of terms borrowed from the Kantian philosophy. They divide "recht," as forming the genus or kind, into "recht in the objective sense" and "recht in the subjective sense," denoting by the former of those unapposite phrases "law."[256]

Austin claimed at the same time, with self-serving firmness, that *"the confusion of 'law' and 'right,' our own writers avoid"*;[257] although, directly contradicting himself, he had to concede in a manuscript note connected with the same judgment that "Hale and Blackstone are *misled by this double meaning* of the word *jus*. They translate *jus* personarum et rerum, '*rights* of persons and things:' which is mere jargon."[258]

Naturally, Austin could have only words of insult for those who addressed themselves to the problems of "right-is-might" or "might-is-right," dismissing them as "shallow scoffers and buffoons" whose ideas are "either a flat truism affectedly and darkly expressed, or thoroughly false and absurd."[259] Strong words from a legal theorist who claims for his own position nothing less than the virtues of strict analytic objectivity and maximal linguistic accuracy, guided by the rigorous pursuit of logical perfection and positively commendable conscious design to guard against the intrusion of potential valuational distortions. In other words, the whole arsenal of "ideology-free" establishment self-mythology.

Austin, as a liberal utilitarian legal theorist and philosopher, differred to a large extent from his most distinguished predecessor, Jeremy Bentham. This difference manifested itself by no means for the sake of a more enlightened approach to the unfolding social conflicts and the attempted English parliamentary reforms connected with them. On the contrary. Though acknowledging that "the *innnovating age* before us" is associated also with "*sinister interests*,"[260] and consequently called for appropriate legislative measures, after 1832—which was not only the year of reform but also the year of Jeremy Bentham's death—Austin firmly rejected the extension of the franchise promoted by his neighbor Bentham. Indeed, he attributed Bentham's political radicalism to what he considered the complete ignorance of the real character of the lower classes by his great utilitarian ancestor whose principal philosophical ideas he himself embraced.

BUT THESE PROBLEMS ARE not confined to the questionable claims and more or less progressive political stance of particular legal theorists at a determinate phase of historical development. Undoubtedly Bentham worked with much greater sympathy for the relative advancement of the socially disadvantaged than Austin. But that was not enough to enable him to overcome the major limitations of their shared utilitarian/liberal stance. Also Bentham operated with the political conceptual arsenal of *huge assumptions* about the nature of the *established* social order, which he wanted to improve without altering in the least its fundamental structural framework.

As an example we may recall his characterization of constitutional law. This is how it reads:

> The constitutional branch [of the body of law] is chiefly employed in conferring, on particular classes of persons, *powers,* to be exercised for the *good of the whole society,* or of considerable parts of it, and prescribing *duties* to the persons invested with those powers. The powers are principally constituted, in the first instance, by discoercive or permissive laws, operating as exceptions to certain laws of the coercive or imperative kind. . . . The duties are created by imperative laws, addressed to the persons on whom the powers are conferred.[261]

The word *classes* appears in this text but simply as the overall designatory term for determinate individuals (like "a tax-gatherer" or "a judge" a few lines later) without any indication of the real nature of *class society*. At the same time Bentham's huge assumption assigns the reason of constitutionality itself to the traditional fiction of its dedication to the *"good of the whole society."* Moreover, the actually prevailing modality of the distribution of *powers* and *duties* is also fictionalized by Bentham, for the same reason and as a result of eliminating their real *class determinations*. For in actuality, powers and duties are *most iniquitously* distributed in the established socioeconomic, and not simply political/constitutional, order.

Naturally, in such conceptions that *idealize* constitutionality, there can be no room for even the slightest hint that most constitutions emerge in the course of actual history *unconstitutionally*, compared to the very different constitutions of the past, with their once equally idealized claims. And of course such changes are established through the more or less violent overturning of the formerly dominant *relations of power.* Historical considerations of genesis and transformation in this kind of liberal/utilitarian conception are nonexistent. Not surprisingly, therefore, the difficult problems of international law and universal law receive a rather vacuous treatment, with generic references to the great variety of nations and languages[262] while taking the

established legislative settings for granted and maintaining that "there remain the mutual transactions between *sovereigns* as such, for the subject of that branch of jurisprudence which may be properly and exclusively termed international."[263]

The same goes for John Austin's view on the subject. It is relevant to quote here Austin's partial acceptance of his utilitarian ancestor's approach. This is how he comments on Bentham's position regarding Universal Law:

> Mr. Bentham is of opinion that it must be confined within very narrow bounds. That is true, if by expository Universal Jurisprudence he intended Jurisprudence expository of that which *obtains* universally as Law. For assuming that the systems of all nations, wholly or in part, exactly resembled each other (i.e. that all or many of the provisions to be found in those several systems were exactly alike), still we could not speak of them with propriety as forming a Universal Law: the sanction being applied *by the government of each community,* and not by a superior common to all mankind. And this ranks international law with morals rather than with law.[264]

At the same time Austin idealizes "refined communities" and their "matured systems of law"[265] corresponding of course primarily to his own. He adds in the same spirit that "it is only the systems of two or three nations which deserve attention: the writings of the Roman Jurists; the decisions of English Judges in modern times; the provisions of French and Prussian Codes as to arrangement. . . . Whether the principles unfolded deserve the name of Universal or not, is of no importance. Jurisprudence may be universal with respect to its subjects: Not less so than legislation."[266] Thus the problem of legal universality is left in a vacuously suspended state of animation, accompanied only by an apologetic hint at the way of getting away from its embarrassing reality by an approving summary reference to the prevailing internal and international power relations.

In regard to the problems of "sovereignty and subjection," we are offered by Austin the same, utterly fictitious, atomistic/individualistic conception of the established relations of domination and rule on both sides of the social/economic and political divide. In this sense we are told:

> If a *determinate* human superior, *not* in a habit of obedience to a like superior, receive *habitual* obedience from the *bulk* of a given society, that determinate superior is sovereign in that society, and the society (including the superior) is a society political and independent. . . . Upon that certain person, or certain body of persons, the other members of the society are *dependent:* or to that

> person, or certain body of persons, the other members of the society are *subject.* . . . In order that a given society may form a society political, the generality or bulk of its members must be in a *habit* of obedience to a determinate and common superior.[267]

When Rousseau and others in Rousseau's spirit speak of sovereignty as belonging to the people, that view has a deep significance, pointing in the direction of the proper understanding of the underlying problem itself, with far-reaching implications for the future of historically sustainable societal decision-making. In contrast, the Austinian kind of liberal/utilitarian approach, with its atomistic/individualistic stance, can only produce obfuscation even in its own terms of reference. For even the pseudo-explanatory postulate of the "habit" of the individuals on one side, and the claimed "absence of the habit of obedience" on the dominant side, needs some explanation in order to acquire any meaning and credibility. Once, however, the historically conditioned and changing class determinations and antagonisms are exiled from the legal and political discourse, or travestied as individual motivations and individually rewardable or punishable acts and habits of "persons" or "bulks and bodies of persons," both the process of legislation and of its structurally prejudged framework become a complete mystery, confounding the debated issues instead of clarifying them, as claimed for its "analytical rigor" by Austin's twentieth-century inheritors.

In a similar vein of confounding individual and class determinations, in the interest of idealizing his individually enjoyable utilitarian "happiness" principle as the postulated real ground of a legitimate political order, Bentham fictionalizes the established framework of government. He writes: "The business of government is the *happiness of society,* by punishing and rewarding. . . . What happiness consists of we have already seen: enjoyment of pleasures, security from pains."[268]

In the same way, the sense in which the question of "materiality" is said to be relevant ("or of importance," as added in a footnote by Bentham) to the utilitarian vision of regulating societal interaction—by dealing with the problems of pleasure and pain—regarding the consequences of the individual's act to be rewarded or punished, we are presented with this judgment: "Now among the consequences of an act, be they what they may, such only, by one who views them in the capacity of a *legislator,* can be said to be material, as either consist of pain or pleasure, or have an influence in the production of pain or pleasure."[269] By adopting this line of reasoning, massively loaded with unmentioned assumptions, we learn absolutely nothing about the actual constitution of the legislative process, including the mode of assigning the regulatory functions of society to the "legislator," nor about the structurally determined most unequal distribution of "pleasure and pain" in the established social and economic

order. The "business of government" defined as the production of the "happiness of society" by punishing or rewarding the individuals through the "materiality of pain and pleasure" can only be pure wishful thinking, precisely because the reality of class antagonisms and corresponding power relations that determine both the production and the distribution of *real materiality* among the social classes is totally obfuscated. This obfuscaton is accomplished by the falsely assumed individualistic terms of reference of both the legislators and the "individual persons" who must be fictitiously "rewarded or punished," thanks to the idealized "business of government."

The same kind of individualistic orientation and corresponding assumption, at the expense of the comprehensive class-determined dimension of the problems—without which, however, no state theory can be made intelligible—vitiates liberal utilitarian philosophy in general. We can see this graphically exemplified when Bentham asserts: "The *community* is a *fictitious body,* composed of the *individual persons* who are considered as constituting it as it were its *members.* The interest of the community, then, is what?—the *sum* of the interests of the several members who compose it."[270] Here again we are offered a big assumption and distortion, worsened by its fetishistic stance and mechanical quantifying assertion. For the vital *qualitative* considerations required for understanding the relationship between the individuals and their communities—and making meaningful the philosophically valid proposition according to which "the whole is greater than its parts" precisely on *qualitative* grounds—are nowhere in sight.

BENTHAMITE UTILITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND their more or less amended varieties exercised a lasting influence on the development of liberal political theory, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. In the present context we cannot be concerned with their details. What greatly matters, however, is the dominance of the unquestioned—and in terms of the liberal/utilitarian theory unquestionable state-apologetic assumptions, together with their presumed justification. To quote Bentham again, this time on the postulated self-evident validity of the fundamental utilitarian moral and political principle, he asks and answers his own question about that principle in this way: "Is it susceptible of any proof? It would seem not: for that which is used to prove every thing else, cannot itself be proved: a chain of proofs must have their commencement somewhere. To give such proof is as impossible as it is needless."[271]

If it is true that "the chain of proofs must have their commencement somewhere," the question still remains: but *where?* For if the function of the allegedly valid commencement of the chain is to prevent inconvenient—because with the given theory incompatible—questioning, that is very far from justifiable.

Here we have a very serious problem confronting us, which rules "out of order" the major task of theoretical and practical disentangling without which it is impossible

to understand the real nature of the state, not to mention the problems of its much needed transformation. Yet the characteristic tendency of liberal/utilitarian theory (and of course by no means only of that) is to use its manifold assumptions to *exclude* the legitimacy of further fundamental questioning, conceding only the acceptability of ameliorating some details of the overall structural determinations of the established order, and at times of major crises not even that. The "commencement of the chain" thus assumes the role of constituting the self-evidently legitimate *barricade* in defense and in justification of that order. This is how the theoretical viability and the practical feasibility of questioning the *state as such* are condemned as *absolute taboos,* because the established reality of the state lies, and must remain, by definition, beyond the proclaimed "commencement of the chain."

In truth, the real question is not which particular point should be designated as the "first member of the chain"—its commencement. That way of approaching the matter can be considered only as a fallaciously/circularly self-assuming arbitrariness. The proper subject in terms of which the "susceptibility of the proof" denied by Bentham must be decided concerns the very nature of the chain itself, its self-servingly *excluding* or, in complete contrast, its critically/questioningly *inclusive* character. If, therefore, on the vital issues of the state, with its antagonistic contradictions, the established actual configuration of the "members of the chain" is what is preventing the required critical enquiry, as it happens to be in the self-assuming liberal/utilitarian theory of politics, in that case one must *step outside* of that chain instead of accepting its *presuppositions* by declaring them to constitute the "necessary commencement of the chain." For *within* the established structural framework of the assumed liberal state formations only the *operational* and *procedural* characteristics are open to examination, as dictated, by definition, in the name of "the commencement of the chain," but not the historical viability and sustainability of the *state itself.*

In conclusion to this section it must be also stressed that the same considerations apply to *any state,* and by no means only to the liberal-democratic state. No conceivable state formation can assume itself as permanently given and forever sustainable in virtue of its chosen links of the chain.

12.6 Hegel's Unintended Swan Song and the Nation-State

THE HEGELIAN CONCEPTION OF political philosophy addresses the substantive issues of the state as such, and not only its operational framework. That is undoubtedly a valid comparative ground for the assessment of its achievements.

However, underlining this vital difference cannot mean that one should consider Hegel's philosophy of the state and right as representing the final summation of the intricate problems of the political domain, as claimed by this great German philosopher. Nevertheless, by comparing the relative merits of the rival approaches it must be emphasized that in contrast to liberal/utilitarian or liberal-democratic philosophy Hegel examines the *state itself* as a substantive historical reality, without any attempt at hiding the antagonistic "civil society" upon which it is erected as its constitutive and indefinitely continuing material ground. Liberal/utilitarian as well as various other post-Hegelian political theories tend to be satisfied with addressing even the gravest issues of the political domain within the unquestioned operational confines of the given state formation, explicitly or by implication excluding—as a matter of self-evidently proper admissibility or not to a valid theoretical discourse on the legislative process itself—the problems both of the origin and the historical sustainability of the existing state reality as such.

Under the dramatic circumstances of Hegel's time, from the American and the French revolutions as well as the Napoleonic Wars to the emergence of, at first embryonic, working-class militancy and its continued extension, the challenging problems of the state assume ever greater intensity. Indeed, the modern state of the capital system asserts an increasingly greater role in the overall control of the societal reproduction process in the course of subsequent historical developments. The new historical stage reflected in Hegel's political philosophy synthesizes in a most paradoxical way both an *end* and a *beginning* in relation to the *contending* social classes of the age. The *end* in question is the historical supersession of the *feudal* class relations in the revolutionary storms of the late eighteenth century, followed with passionate interest and understanding (his word) by Hegel himself. The *beginning,* however, represents a much more complicated matter for him, in that it marks the appearance of the working classes on the historical stage. Not surprisingly, we thus find an incomparably more sustainable understanding of the *end*—the truly irreversible *historical closure* of the feudal order, manifest in the collapse of the *ancient regime* welcomed by Hegel—than the emergent forces of the novel historical *beginning.*

Nevertheless, Hegel attempts to synthesize them both in his conception of the relationship between his "civil society" and the "ethical state." Undertaking such a synthesis represents his philosophical greatness in the field. At the same time, the way in which he accomplishes it, by *subsuming* the new beginning under the proclaimed permanently enduring overall framework of the idealized state—which in his view is destined to reconcile the contradictions of civil society—marks the historical limitations of his approach. For Hegel's grandiose unintended swan song offers a conceptualization of the two in the form of enclosing the forces of the radically new beginning

under the dominance of the unalterable *historical closure* in his philosophy of the state and law. This is done because it provides the only way in which the unique Hegelian synthesis of antagonistic civil society and antagonism-resolving ethical state can offer a perspective compatible with his own class horizon.

Tellingly, with the help of a powerful poetic imagery Hegel rationalizes in a categorically self-justifying way—as the only viable philosophical stance in general—the adoption of the perspective of the historical closure when he writes in the penultimate paragraph of the Preface to his *Philosophy of Right* about the paradigmatic "owl of Minerva":

> Philosophy in any case always comes on the scene too late. . . . As the thought of the world, it appears only when actuality is already there *cut and dried after its process of formation has been completed.* The teaching of the concept, which is also history's inescapable lesson, is that it is only when actuality is mature that the ideal first appears over against the real and that the ideal apprehends this same real world in its substance and builds it up for itself into the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its gray in gray, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's gray in gray it cannot be *rejuvenated* but only *understood.* The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk.[272]

In this respect the trouble is not only that the emerging social forces of the new beginning evidently cannot be there under the novel circumstances as "cut and dried after their process of formation has been completed." That is the secondary consideration in this matter, because it requires very complicated historical conflicts and social confrontations, with advances and reversals as the conditions permit, before the social subject that assumes the role of being the carrier of the "new beginning" can achieve its full maturity and realize its historical potentiality and corresponding mandate. And that may take a very long time indeed. But it is far from legitimate to exclude "rejuvenation," on a self-serving a priori ground, in favor of resignatory *"understanding."*

The real issue at stake is much more fundamental than the maturity (or not) of a social force to the point of being cut and dried, so as to become visible from the perspective of the owl of Minerva. For in addition to the *relative* historical differences in the determination of the embryonic working-class militancy in the young Hegel's time—evidenced in the great turmoil of the revolutionary explosions themselves, including attempts like the formation of organizational forces that try to assert themselves as, for instance, Babeuf's *"society of the equals"* (and being savagely repressed

for it)—there is also an *absolute, qualitatively novel* dimension to this complex of problems. It consists in the *total impossibility* of emancipating the forces of *capital's hegemonic alternative: labor*—the members of which in sheer numbers constitute by far the overwhelming majority of society—in the traditional form, which in the past always resulted in the emergent new forces imposing themselves as privileged social exploiters on the rest of society. There are not enough people in the rest of society to make that feasible. In other words, the *absolute radical novelty* of the revolutionary turmoil in Hegel's time, which was never conceivable in the past, defined itself in this: that *class exploitation itself* must be relegated forever to the historical past, asserting in that contrasting form the elementary requirements of the new beginning. And the "owl of Minerva" could offer no help for that. For the *qualitative uniqueness* of the age of these great revolutions was to turn into an irreversible historical anachronism the traditional solution of the pressing problems through the customary *"change in personnel"* from one class of exploiters to another. Such radical novelty in history could not be conceptualized by adopting the perspective of *historical closure* in the name of the owl of Minerva. On the contrary, a historically sustainable vision of the *present and the future* also had to be an integral part of such historically arising change in perspective.

BUT THEN, IF ONE takes seriously the objective determinations of the unfolding historical changes, together with their fundamental implications for the great cause of human emancipation in terms of the qualitatively different imperatives of the "new beginning," in that case the question of state theory must also be deeply affected by the necessary shift in perspective. For the conception of the *classless society* as the real condition of human emancipation in all-embracing terms is *totally incompatible* with the continued existence of the state—of *any state*—as the *separate organ* of overall political decision-making in the societal reproduction process. This is why the Marxian approach to the same problems inextricably had to link the radically new modality of *communal* social metabolic control—under the *planned* management of the conditions of their life by the freely associated producers, guided by the vital orienting principle of *substantive equality*—to the equally necessary determination highlighted under the name of the withering away of the state. For it was *inconceivable* to envisage the required radical emancipatory transformation of not this or that particular social class but the *whole of humanity*—and the qualitative novelty historically unfolding in the great revolutionary period was precisely the *inseparability* of the two—without the supersession of the *state as such*. Not simply its *overthrow,* as often projected in vain, because whatever can be overthrown can also be *restored,* and all too frequently had been, but its complete *withering away* and irretrievable consignment to the historical past.

The greatness of Hegel in the field of sizing up the huge problems of the state was manifest in his monumental scheme of things proclaiming the organic relationship between existent civil society and the projected ethical state. In this way Hegel could devise, in the face of the social antagonisms he *had to* and *did* concede, a solution presented in the form of his systemic depiction of the *contradictory actualization* of the *historic closure* which itself put under question marks the continued viability of the for a very long time dominant *class exploitative order* of society. And in that sense Hegel conceptualized an objectively crucial line of *historic demarcation* that dramatically defined in its novelty the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries.

However, the historic closure objectively marking the end of the class exploitative order in general could not "actualize itself" (one of Hegel's frequently used explanatory categories) *by itself*. It was also pregnant with the objective imperatives of a qualitatively different order, assuming the form of a radical challenge unknown in past history, and representing the vital objective and subjective conditions of an effective supersession of the class exploitative order as such. Thus *past, present and future* were inseparably combined in the unfolding new historical challenge. The qualitatively and radically new of the revolutionary age, putting on the historical agenda as the necessary condition of emancipating labor the inseparable combination of that imperative with the emancipation of all of humanity, was *already there* in Hegel's time. Indeed it represented the *greatest challenge* in all history for the whole of humanity.

To be sure, the forces involved in promoting change could not be said to be there "*cut and dried after their process of formation has been completed,"* as the owl of Minerva would demand. The relevant historical forces only started to embark on their process of formation through a—by its very nature necessarily contested, deeply antagonistic—historical course of development. But the *challenge* itself was—and remains all the way to our own time—absolutely irrepressible, destined to decide whether humanity is to survive or perish.

Facing it, Hegel consciously adopted the perspective of the *past* in the form of turning the unfolding *present,* in the name of his definition of the absolute fulfillment of the reconciliatory self-actualized World Spirit as "right from the beginning" eternal present,[273] and transformed the three dimensions of temporality into a permanent *historical closure.* Moreover, he also *justified* the eternalized present from the nostalgic vantage point of the owl of Minerva, projected as the paradigmatic embodiment of historic closure. He did it also in this respect because doing so provided for him the only way to reconcile, in tune with his own class interests, the forceful condemnation of past exploitative privileges (especially highlighted in his early writings)[274] with the transfigured variety of class domination in general sanctified by his *Theodicaea*. And he conceived the latter as the proclaimed imaginary transcendence of the antagonisms

of civil society thanks to the supreme role of the idealized state, which itself was said to embody nothing less than *"the image and actuality of reason,"* as we have seen. This is why Hegel's grandiose philosophy of right and its projected "ethical state" as the fulfillment of the ways of God could only be realized in its resignatory references to the owl of Minerva as an unintended swan song.

Nevertheless, within the adopted philosophical framework of the state and the law Hegel proceeded to explore with the greatest consistency and intellectual rigor the necessary requirements of the operation of the projected state formation in the given world order. In this sense he characterized the only feasible state reality to be the world historically constituted but from now on untranscendable *nation-state.* He thought through even the most perilous implications of such a state formation—both *internally* and *externally*, regarding the determinations of *sovereignty* and the forever recurrent antagonisms of *interstate relations*—to their logical conclusion. Accordingly, he insisted:

> The nation-state is mind in its substantive rationality and immediate actuality and is therefore the *absolute power on earth.* It follows that every state is *sovereign* and autonomous against its neighbours. It is entitled in the first place and without qualification to be sovereign from their point of view, i.e. to be recognized by them as sovereign.[275]

But of course it depended on the actually prevailing *power relations* that a particular state could successfully assert its "right to sovereignty" against its weaker neighbors. Hegel did not preach idealistic illusions on this subject. On the contrary, verging on cynicism in the rationalization and justification of his arguments in embracing the necessary implications for large-scale wars among nation-states, he proclaimed:

> A state through its subjects has widespread connexions and many-sided interests, and these may be readily and considerably injured; but it remains inherently *indeterminable* which of these injuries is to be regarded as a specific breach of treaty or as an injury to the honour and autonomy of the state. The reason for this is that a state may regard its infinity and honour as a stake in each of its concerns, *however minute,* and it is all the more inclined to susceptibility to injury the more its strong individuality is impelled as a result of *long domestic peace* to seek and create a *sphere of activity abroad.*[276]

In plain language this meant that the legitimate ground of war could be arbitrarily decided, "however minute," in the interest of countering the "undesirable" effects of

"long domestic peace" by creating a successful "sphere of activity abroad." Just like we have actually experienced it in the last two centuries. In Hegel's vision the nation-state was inseparable from the necessity of peculiarly legitimized wars that could only mock Kant's postulate of "perpetual peace" by saying that "corruption in nations would be the product of prolonged, let alone 'perpetual' peace."[277] International law, with its unavoidable universalistic claims, was always the weakest domain of modern bourgeois theories of politics and morality.[278] The objective imperatives of capital's social metabolic order asserted themselves without ceremony, and their pseudo-universal justificatory theorizations could only be shabby and feeble even in the case of an intellectual giant like Hegel.

A far too long period of history after the death of Hegel—and also in the same year of 1831 the death of his outstanding Prussian military contemporary, General Carl Marie von Clausewitz, who famously defined war as *the continuation of politics by other means*—seems to have fully confirmed Hegel's views that the nation-state is the *absolute power on earth*, and therefore as an absolute can assert its sovereignty through the necessity of its wars, no matter how destructive. Forty years after Hegel and General von Clausewitz, the new imperialism, with its lethally contending nation-states, among them in a prominent place the Prussian Bismarck's Germany, *began* a period of ever more intensive military confrontations, bringing with it in due course the formerly inconceivable conflagrations of two world wars, with countless millions perishing through their devastation.[279]

IF HEGEL IS RIGHT in his judgment about the nation-state constituting the historically insurmountable absolute power on earth, is there a way out from this fateful course of destructiveness that even today seems to prevail in more ways than one in different parts of the world? If the answer is "no," in that case Hegel's unintended swan song left to us in his philosophy of the state would have to be also the swan song for humanity itself.

It is true, of course, that the nation-state dominates our life everywhere, despite the wishful projections of benevolent "globalization." In fact the grave historical defect of capital's social metabolic order, representing one of its structurally determined absolute limits, is that it failed to produce the *all-embracing political state* of the capital system in general, while continuing its irrepressible drive toward *global integration* of its *material* reproductive structures. The nation-state thus remained to our own days perilously "absolute" in that sense. But that is not—and by itself cannot be—the end of the story. The limits in this respect also unfold through the modality of objective historical developments.

The limits of the Hegelian philosophy of the state, in the same way, are not simply internal-philosophical but *objective historical* and by no means evident in their author's

lifetime. However, they become painfully clear when we set the Hegelian conception of the state in its claims to *timeless* validity against the reality of our present. The Hegelian timelessness of the state is predicated in his work through the notion of the already mentioned "eternally present," which is paradoxically transfigured into *absolute finality,* thanks to the "right from the beginning completed" being of rationality itself in the shape of the divine World Spirit, evocatively combined by Hegel with the unquestionable self-explanatory mythological authority of the owl of Minerva. Naturally, the real agency of history and the state in this vision could not be the self-conscious human being. It had to be the divine World Spirit,[280] with its "cunning of reason." Hegel described the particular states, nations and individuals as "the *unconscious tools* and organs of the world mind at work within them,"[281] and the historically acting individuals were characterized by him as "the living *instruments* of what is in substance the deed of the world mind and they are therefore directly at one with that deed though it is *concealed* from them and is *not their aim and object*."[282]

To be sure, Hegel was not alone with this view. He shared its overall conceptual design with the whole of the bourgeois philosophical tradition in its ascending phase of historical development, when it was still concerned with confronting real dilemmas and offering from the shared standpoint of the giants of bourgeois thought some feasible and compatible solutions to them, displaying at the same time the social and historical limitations of such standpoint. Thus we find the philosophical equivalents of accounting for the absence of self-consciousness in the historical actors and their deeds defined by Hegel himself as the "cunning of reason" (*List der Vernunft*) in Vico's "providence," in Adam Smith's "invisible hand," and in Kant's providential "plan of nature." All these rather mysterious explanatory schemes, intended to illuminate the real nature of historical aims, were postulated with the corresponding powers of their realization. And the postulated powers were said to be capable of asserting and imposing themselves with unquestionable legitimacy *over against* the intentions, desires, ideas, and conscious designs of the historically existent human beings. For even in the ascending phase of capital's historical development it was quite *inconceivable* to envisage from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie—which *had to* eternalize "civil society" under its continued domination—a materially identifiable and socially efficacious real *alternative collective subject* as the carrier of sustainable historical transformations. This is why there could be no *trans-individual* (communal) historical subject in all such conceptions of history and the state, but only *supra-individual* and consequently also *supra-human*. Not even when Adam Smith intended to offer something tangible, in the form of the market, but had to indicate as its mysterious benevolent regulatory force the "invisible hand."

Hegel could only acknowledge the temporality of the past as already fully accomplished. There could be no question of the actually given—and idealized/

eternalized—present becoming one day past history. In this sense he wrote: "The History of the World travels from the East to the West, for *Europe is absolutely the end of History.*"[283] Accordingly, there has been a past before History succeeded in traveling from the East to the West but never more. Consequently, the violence and imperialist expansion of the dominant nation-states could never be consigned to the past because its presentness represented being perfectly in tune with the ultimate reality of the self-disclosing World Spirit as the "Principle of the North" assigned to the *Germanic realm* and to the Germanic (not narrowly German) state. For the Hegelian Germanic state included the highly praised empire-building English state under its determinations. And Hegel summed up the supreme ideality of what has been accomplished with these words:

> The realm of fact has discarded its barbarity and unrighteous caprice, while the realm of truth has abandoned the world of beyond and its arbitrary force, so that the *true reconciliation* which discloses the *state as the image and actuality of reason* has become objective. In the state self-consciousness finds in an organic development the actuality of its substantive knowing and willing.[284]

This is where the historical untenability of Hegel's grandiose conception and resignatory swan song, in its nostalgic appeal to the owl of Minerva which excludes any possibility of "rejuvenation," becomes absolutely striking. For the postulated unity of the realms of fact and truth, and the decreed reconciliatory solution of the underlying contradictions—through the claimed self-disclosing actualization of the World Spirit as Reason embodied in the ethical state's forever sustained symbiotic relationship with the given bourgeois civil society—reveals its extremely problematical character right from the beginning. A conception of the state and history which was acclaimed to be valid not only by many of Hegel's contemporaries but also by his much later followers.

THE HEGELIAN PHILOSOPHY OF history and the state suffered a great prospective derailment when its author opted for the track that he actually followed through toward its limits with unfailing logical consistency. With penetrating insight worthy of a philosophical genius, in a period of epochal revolutionary turmoil, Hegel perceived that a "new beginning" had objectively entered the historical horizon, asserting itself as the *impossibility* to settle the contending historic claims by emancipating only a *part* of the social divide in the old form of imposing it on the rest of society as the "changed personnel." There was an objective alternative to that traditional form, arising in the same revolutionary situation, even if far from "cut and dried," but only in its embryonic process of formation. However, siding with that alternative would not just

logically *imply* but also inevitably *require* the necessary elaboration of a radically different historical perspective, premised on the indispensable, and historically in truly epochal terms sustainable, supersession of all fundamental social antagonism. Choosing that avenue appeared to be too prohibitive to Hegel, given the actual relation of social forces and the turn of historic events subsequent to the French Revolution.

Yet, the question remained: could one deny that the epochal antagonisms highlighted by the revolutionary turmoil do not exist or do not matter, as some Romantic philosophers did? The grotesquely biased position of such Romantics, assuming the form of pretended divine justification, was inseparable from conservative, indeed profoundly reactionary, social interests. Thus Friedrich Schlegel, for instance, unashamedly argued in the same epoch which produced the historical conception of Hegel—the age not only of the French but also of the Industrial Revolution:

> The Creator has not reserved to Himself the beginning and the end alone, and let the rest follow its own course; but in the middle, and *at every point* also, of its progress, the Omnipotent Will can *intervene at pleasure*. If He pleases He can instantaneously stop this vital development, and suddenly *make the course of nature stand still;* or, in a moment, give life and movement to what before stood motionless and inanimate. Generally speaking, it is in the divine power to *suspend the laws of nature,* to interfere directly with them, and, as it were, to intercalate among them some higher and immediate operation of His power, as an exception to their development. For as in the *social frame of civil life,* the author and *giver of the laws* may occasionally set them aside, or, in their administration, allow certain cases of exception, even so is it, also, with nature's Lawgiver.[285]

The reactionary intent behind Schlegel's arbitrary assertions is fairly obvious. It becomes even clearer when he draws a direct parallel between the "wisdom of the divine Order of Things" and of the "divine Order in the History of the World and the Relation of States"[286] to justify the principle according to which "power emanates from God" and therefore strictly forbids us to "*violate or forcibly subvert any established right,* whether essentially sacred or hallowed only by prescription."[287] It would be difficult to make the association of such an absurd position more transparent—which goes as far as denying even the continued validity of elementary natural laws—with blindly backward-looking restoratory social interests in any age, let alone in an epoch of revolutionary upheavals.

Obviously, this kind of blind alley could not be followed by a philosophical genius of great integrity like Hegel. He realized and positively endorsed the dramatic

transformations whereby the politically repressive conditions of the *ancient regime* had been overthrown by the French Revolution and, accordingly, must belong to the historical past. But his class interests could not allow him to side with the emerging new potentialities of the unfolding historical development. This is why he opted for the track that both displayed the structural antagonisms of civil society itself, and at the same time stipulated their *reconciliation* through the grandiose—in the Hegelian conception of the *"eternally present"* from the beginning of time preordained but not at any time arbitrarily "at his pleasure Omnipotent" and natural-law-denying—intervention of the World Spirit itself, thanks to its worldly institution of the established *ethical state,* proclaimed by Hegel himself as "the image and actuality of reason," and "the absolute power on earth."

The Hegelian approach constituted a monumental vision, even if in the long run it could only lead to derailment. For the track opted for and followed through with great consistency by Hegel happened to be a very long track. The magnitude of the task of *universal* emancipation, which never before appeared as objectively feasible in the course of historical development, was in a strange but meaningful form incorporated and retained in the Hegelian conception, in a form compatible with his chosen track. This could be because Hegel refused to offer some pedestrian earthly reconciliation and accommodation to the depicted structural antagonisms in mean prosaic terms. Nothing less than the divine World Spirit's supra-human historical agency, embodied in the proclaimed "rationality of actuality," could match up to the acknowledged magnitude of the stakes as perceived and depicted by Hegel. And the train itself commandeered by him could travel on the chosen track for a very long historical time. Indeed, it could travel throughout the entire modern epoch of antagonistic history; for as long as fighting out the broadest societal conflicts remained under the—even in our time still prevailing supremacy—of the "sovereign" nation-states.

Nevertheless the derailment to come, which was foreshadowed from the very beginning when Hegel opted for the ultimately fateful track while turning his back to the "immature" new beginning, is bound to inexorably "actualize itself" when the train of capital's national state formation, glorified by Hegel, "hits the buffers." But will it be a catastrophic derailment, destroying the whole of humanity, or can the train itself be slowed down in time, so that only its driverless front engine carriage is crushed by the impact when the train hits the buffers? That is the question for us.

The derailment is bound to happen in our own historic time. The Hegelian ideal "actualization of the rational" could not be accomplished, notwithstanding Hegel's postulate pronounced in wishfully past temporality, according to which "the realm of truth has abandoned the world of beyond and its arbitrary force." In sharp contrast to that, the actual violation of truth in the interest of enforcing capital's social metabolic

control over our conditions of existence is ubiquitous, and state-legitimated arbitrary force is the ultimate guarantor and enforcer of the requirements of such mode of control. At the same time, the "actualization" of the underlying historical potentialities proceeds but is very far from its idealized Hegelian sense. On the contrary, it assumes most threatening forms. Accordingly, set against the truly and gravely actualized, and indeed ever-intensifying dangers of our own historical predicament, the Hegelian theory of history and the state brings itself down to earth. For the reckless pursuit of the antagonistic imperatives of the nation-state that we witnessed and continue to endure in different parts of the world, and that in its proclaimed timeless configuration and absolute permanence had to be idealized by Hegel, in our actually existing reality could only be *suicidal to humanity.* And no conceivable postulate of any imaginary *supra-human* historical agency—be it Adam Smith's "invisible hand" or Hegel's World Spirit with its "Absolute Cunning of Reason"—could offer a reconciliatory solution.

For this reason, under the conditions of the deepening structural crisis of our system of social metabolic reproduction, the problems at stake could not be greater in the now unfolding process of capital's antagonistic globalization, wedded to the interests of the necessarily contending nation-states. They bring to the fore a whole range of contradictions directly concerned not with the remediable operational and procedural defects of some particular state formations but with the *reality of the state as such.* For the state itself, as constituted in the last five or six centuries, is grounded on global capital's far from historically sustainable material development, due to the inherent destructive imperatives of the capital system's now pursued modality of reproduction.

"Grow or perish" continues to be the order of the day, and the meaning of growth, in the spirit of the prevailing order, is fetishistically reduced—by violating *truth* and absurdly imposing its destructive transfiguration as *falsehood,* not in the *"world of beyond"* but in the actually existing one, through the naked instrumentality of state-legitimated "*arbitrary force"*—to its fallaciously asserted identity with *wasteful capital-expansion.* And the state formations of the capital system sustain that kind of development on all continents. As a result, the structurally generated social and political crisis and the much needed, though as yet slowly unfolding, protest is visible everywhere in our planetary household, wherever we look. The direct material determinations of capital's reproductive order are fully complemented by the all-embracing political command structure of capital's state formations, constituting thereby the structurally intertwined and enmeshed reality, and the practical vicious circle, of the capital system as a whole.

Is there a way out from the perilous maze of this system's antagonistic contradictions? Where are the gaps to be exposed and what are the effective leverages to be taken hold of in the interest of the required systemic change? What is to be done and

what can be done at this juncture of history with regard to the great problems of the state? These are the problems we must now turn to.

12.7 Capital's Social Metabolic Order and the Failing State

THE NECESSARY CRITIQUE OF the state, to be sure, cannot mean the advocacy of turning our inevitably global modality of societal reproduction into some kind of utopian bucolic village community. Socialists who assert the validity of the communal productive interchange of the freely associated individuals, with Marx among them, are crudely accused of indulging in such idle fantasies. The truth of the matter is the diametrical opposite. For the gravest problem of capital's state formations—from which many potentially lethal antagonisms arise, demonstrating the total failure even of the most violent and aggressive attempts of monopolistic imperialism to solve them in the past, by imposing through the force of arms one or two of the temporarily most dominant powers over the rest of them (like Germany and Japan in the Second World War)—is that capital, due to its innermost structural determinations, could not produce the *state of the capital system in general,* as mentioned before. But this great historic failure, to which there can be no feasible remedy on capital's material ground, cannot be wished out of existence, nor can it be swept under the proverbial carpet. The problem itself remains and with the passing of time can only become more acute, until a historically tenable solution is elaborated to the underlying antagonistic determinations. In this sense, far from orienting itself toward the dream world of some utopian bucolic village community, the radical socialist critique of the state must also take on board this great, chronically unresolved, global problem.

Solution in this respect can only be envisaged from the long-term perspective of the other road that could not be adopted by Hegel. As we know, it was Marx's historic merit to bring to the forefront of debate—in the period of the new revolutionary wave of the 1840s—the far-reaching implications and the practical imperatives of this new epochal perspective, elaborating in his great work the theoretical ground and the overall strategic horizon of its prospective international unfolding. But he was by no means the first to passionately engage in the struggle for the realization of the advocated aims and objectives. Indeed, as far back as half a century before Marx, Babeuf and his comrades, in their "conspiracy of the equals," clearly voiced some of the principal requirements, and their movement was brutally liquidated in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Even the Marxian definition of the significant difference between the lower and the higher stage of socialist transformation, formulated in his *Critique of the Gotha Program* in terms of the fundamental

societal orienting principle of human need, recalls Babeuf's eloquently stated views on real equality:

> Equality must be measured by the *capacity* of the worker and the *need* of the consumer, not by the intensity of labor and the quantity of things consumed. A man endowed with a certain degree of strength, when he lifts a weight of ten pounds, labors as much as another man with five times the strength when he lifts fifty pounds. He who, to satisfy a burning thirst, swallows a pitcher of water, enjoys no more than his comrade who, but slightly thirsty, sips a cupful. The aim of the communism in question is *equality of pains and pleasures,* not of *consumable things and workers' tasks*.[288]

Moreover, the "Manifesto of the Equals" by Babeuf and his comrades explicitly and most forcefully condemned the hypocritical exploitation and domination of the overwhelming majority of the human race in the actually established order, as divided into "masters and servants" and "rulers and ruled." They condemned the social order that had no shame of justifying such domination in the name of "equality before the law" and of the "Rights of Man."[289] In other words, they condemned the cruelly enforced realities of Babeuf's time, which remain the burning issues of state domination even today.

However, despite the violent repression of Babeuf's movement the new historic trend emerging from the great revolutionary turmoil at the turn pf the eighteenth to nineteenth century continued to slowly advance and in due course assumed a variety of forms well before Marx and the revolutionary explosions in the 1840s. In its course of most difficult unfolding, due to the established relations of power and the corresponding exercise of repression by the dominant forces, advancement for this trend could only be made for quite some time through "capillary changes" and in a subterranean form, at first in different parts of Europe. Nevertheless, through the survival of socialist secret societies and through their passionate advocacy of equality some progress continued to be made, which in its turn had brought with it even some most surprising ramifications.

We should remember in this respect a social connection of major importance not confined to the early nineteenth century but reaching all the way deep into our own historical present. It appeared through the dramatic and far-reaching historical developments in Venezuela under the presidency of Hugo Chávez Frias in the last thirteen years. As we all know, the inspirer of President Chávez was *El Libertador* Simón Bolívar who not only defeated the army of the Spanish Empire in Latin America but also liberated the slaves in the face of violent opposition by his own class—and even

his loving sister describing him as "crazy"—several decades before that issue could be even raised and partially settled in North America. And Bolívar himself insisted that equality was and had to be respected as *"the law of laws,"* adding that "without equality all freedoms, all rights perish. For it we must make sacrifices."[290] Indeed, in his magnificent Address to the Congress of Angostura he singled out the liberation of the slaves as the most vital of all of his orders and decrees, saying: "I leave it to your sovereign decision to reform or revoke all of the statutes and decrees enacted by me; but I plead with you to confirm the *absolute liberty of the slaves,* as I would plead for my life and for the life of the Republic."[291]

What is also relevant in this context is that Bolívar's legendary teacher, who was much admired not only in his childhood but all his life by Bolívar, Simón Rodriguez—a passionate believer in equality who took Bolívar to Monte Sacro in Rome in August 1805 and was a witness to his solemn oath for the liberation of his country from Spanish rule—lived in Paris for decades after leaving Rome and, like Marx in the early 1840s, frequented socialist secret societies in Paris, returning to South America in 1823. Thus the subterranean trend assumed this most unusual form, linking faraway continents and enlisting for the cause of real equality and the corresponding liberation of the slaves a great historic figure, Bolívar, who was supposed to be destined by his social origin to fight on the opposite side of the class barricade. Obviously Hegel, who on the "African character" propagandized the most absurd racist views in his *Philosophy of History,* never expected his divine *List der Vernunft* (Cunning of Reason) to play such dirty tricks and indulge in such "subversive acts of history."

ANOTHER VITALLY IMPORTANT DIMENSION of the same trend that had to define human emancipation in truly universal and substantively equitable terms concerns the relationship between the way we reproduce our direct material conditions of life, through the hours we dedicate every day to work, and the hours we allocate for other activities. Naturally, there is an important individual aspect to this question, enabling the particular individuals to assign determinate portions of their time for this rather than that kind of activity. But there are some vital social preconditions in operation before the individuals can even begin to think about how to allocate their own time. These preconditions are determined by particular individuals' place in the social order, giving to some of them much more "liberty" (or "freedom") while curtailing with the same stroke the equality of the others. This is why Bolívar was absolutely right to insist that *"without equality all freedoms, all rights perish."*

The fundamentally social question of allocating our time is, of course, modifiable through the historical advancement in society's productive powers and the adopted orienting principles that can be used for regulating the social metabolism of

reproduction. And not only the historically attained degree of productive advancement but also the adopted orienting principles of metabolic control require an overall societal frame of reference to acquire their proper meaning. Certainly we are limited by the historically attained degree of productive advancement. But we are no less limited—on the contrary, rather more so, and potentially even crippled—if we do not elaborate and adopt the appropriate orienting principles of social metabolic control, because that could nullify the realization of the objectively attained degree of scientific and other productive advancement. And that is precisely where the vital question of the state's role enters the picture. For the overall societal reproduction process, with the multiplicity of its material productive and various decision-making enterprises, must *cohere* in some way, otherwise the society in question could not survive.

Thus the healthy functioning of society depends, on the one hand, on the *nature* of the material productive enterprises, according to the specific historical conditions that define and shape their character, and on the other hand, on the *modality* of the *overall* political decision-making process that *complements* the societal metabolic process as activated in the multiplicity of the particular material reproductive units, helping them to *cohere* into a *sustainable whole.* Under some historical conditions—especially under the rule of capital as a social metabolic order of reproduction—this cohesion is workable only if the overall political controlling dimension is constituted as the *separate/alienated* decision-making organ of some of the most vital functions. The state formations of the capital system must act as the *necessary corrective*—for as long as they are historically capable of fulfilling such corrective functions—to *structural defects* identifiable in the nature of the *material reproductive structures* themselves. However, and this cannot be stressed enough as the other side of the same coin, the need for *cohesiveness* is an *absolute* societal requirement, and therefore cannot disappear even with the "withering away of the state."

Two important consequences follow from this absolutely necessary consideration:

1. The radical critique of capital's state formation in our time is directly related to its—ever more dangerous—*historic failure* to fulfill its vital *corrective functions,* which are called for by the antagonistic material reproductive process itself. As a result the now *failing state* (the painful actuality of our time, irrespective of how many debt-ridden trillions are poured into capital's bottomless hole) can only endanger the overall societal metabolic process, instead of remedying the crisis. This is because the state is *integral* to the structural determinations of the capital system, and its required corrective/remedial functions can only be *internal* to it. Thus the state cannot *exempt itself* from the unfolding *structural crisis* of the capital system as a whole.

2. The relative primacy in this inextricable interrelatedness between capital's material reproductive structures and its state formations—which at a certain point of history becomes a vicious circle—belongs to the former. It is therefore impossible to envisage the necessary withering away of the state without simultaneously confronting the critical problems of radically altering the global material reproduction process. The painful historical failure to make any progress so far in the direction of the state's withering away envisaged by Marx acquires its intelligibility on this ground. And the same consideration applies not only to the evaluation of the past, concerning the forces which prevented the realization of the original expectations, but also to the prospects for the future.

With regard to point 1, it is highly relevant that the current advocates of "liberal imperialism" arrogantly define the territories of their wishful colonial reconquest as the "failed states." No explanation is given why the so-called failed states are supposed to have failed. It is simply asserted with declamatory arbitrariness that such states must be considered failed states. This view is combined with the equally arbitrary declamation—a total logical non sequitur conveniently stipulated by the self-interested propounders of such "theories"—according to which the peremptorily condemned failed states must be brought under the rule of the dominant capitalist states, without even asking the elementary question of the practical feasibility (in terms of material and human costs and unavoidable destructiveness) of the advocated "liberal imperialist" undertaking. Throwing in the word *liberal* is expected to take care of all such concerns. And what is even worse, the "strategic thinkers" and their high-ranking politician sponsors who promote such "vision" of humanity's future also refuse to admit that *the failing states are their own*—still dominant—*core states* of the capital system. One of the most acute signs of that real failure of the core states is that with their continuing war adventures, proclaimed in the name of "human rights," "democracy," and "liberty," they try to impose the historically anachronistic and in actually experienced history dramatically failed modality of direct colonial domination on the arbitrarily denounced "failed states."

We must have a closer look at the deep-seated causal determination of these literally vital problems of our unfolding historical development in the final pages of this section. Regarding point 2, there can be no escape from the vicious circle of capital's inherently antagonistic determinations—which in our time endanger the survival of humanity not only in military terms but also on the ecological plane—without radically altering our modality of social metabolic control by completely *eradicating* capital from the societal reproduction process.

THE CHALLENGE IN THIS respect, which has acquired monumental proportions in our time, was *embryonically* conceptualized a quarter of a century before Marx, as an integral part of the far-sighted new trend that raised the question of emancipation in universal and substantively equitable terms, extended to the whole of humanity. In relation to the essential question of *how* we could and should meaningfully allocate our time—the one and only lifetime of all human beings—for the appropriate purposes among the competing demands, with vital implications for the most relevant issue of the individuals' "free time," the answer was given in an anonymous pamphlet as far back as 1821 in this way:

> Wealth is *disposable time* and nothing more. . . . If the whole labor of a country were sufficient only to raise the support of the whole population, there would be no *surplus labor,* consequently nothing that can be allowed to accumulate as capital. . . . *Truly wealthy a nation,* if there is *no interest* or if the *working day* is six hours rather than twelve.[292]

Thus the crucial category of *disposable time* is brought forward by the anonymous writer, in addition to "no interest," "surplus labor" and the "working day," advocating for the future—and for the really meaningful wealth of any nation—the reduction of the working day to *six hours*. But of course this perspective anticipates even today a radically different world. For capital can only be interested in the reduction of *necessary labor time* in the service of capital-accumulation and for maximizing profit.

The addressee of this anonymous pamphlet was Lord John Russell, a progressive Whig political figure (Earl Bertrand Russell's ancestor), who in the 1820s had sympathy for social Reform and later for the reduction of the long working day to some extent. But of course a whole world separated him from the general perspective of the pamphlet itself. The idea of making *"disposable time"* the orienting principle for the regulation of societal reproduction implied the creation of a radically different social order. Not only in 1821, when it was suggested, but a few years short of two hundred years from the original idea, in our time, it is still a major challenge for the *future,* without which the socialist mode of social metabolic reproduction could not be considered historically sustainable.

But how is it possible to institute in reality the orienting principle of *disposable time* as the effective regulator of the societal reproduction process? Who can rightfully decide *how much disposable time* is available to be allocated for the diverse productive and humanly fulfilling functions that can *rightfully* claim an appropriate share of it? Indeed, who can decide what is the real amount of both the quantity *and the quality* of the disposable time of the particular individuals and of their society as a

whole? Under the rule of capital this is inconceivable. But even between the transitional lower stage and the higher stage of the advocated socialist societal reproductive order the contrast is still striking in this respect. For the principle of distributing the social product among the members of society according to their quantitatively measurable *contribution* to the total social product can be regulated with relative ease by a *general policy*, possibly even under the supervision of a separate authority instituted as temporary. But the proper way of distributing the social wealth *"according to the needs of the individuals"*—indicated in Babeuf's case by the example of his thirsty men who need a pitcher of water or only a cupful—calls for the fully equitable acknowledgment of the social individuals' own decision-making authority on the subject. For only the socially conscious individuals can truly judge what can be considered not only the quantitatively (measured in hours) but also in a *qualitative* sense (concerning the *intensity*) the true amount of their freely available *disposable time,* so as to be rightfully allocated by the individuals concerned for productive purposes as well as for their own fulfillment. At the same time, this issue involves deciding the question: What are the genuine human *needs*—in contrast to capricious wants and "artificial appetites" capable of endless multiplication, like the monetary figure inserted into bank accounts—to be enjoyed by the social individuals on a substantively equitable basis? No *separate authority* can claim legitimacy on these matters.

Naturally, none of these questions are practically compatible with the horizon of the capital system whose objective material imperatives—which must be supported, and indeed they are, by the system's corresponding state formations—press for the reduction of *necessary labor time only,* and thereby for the inevitable production of *superfluous people*, together with the now officially acknowledged and cynically justified "structural unemployment." For the potential increase of real wealth through the conscious adoption of *disposable time* as the overall regulator of production—in contrast to the dehumanizing imperative of endless capital-accumulation—and the immense amount of *free time* generated by the utilization of disposable time when the working day is reduced to six hours or even considerably less than that, could only function as *social dynamite,* blowing the capital system sky high in the absence of humanly meaningful creative activity at the disposal of individuals.

This orienting principle of societal reproduction is incompatible with the capital system, including its state formations, on the ground of three vital considerations. First, because the adoption of disposable time calls for *qualitative* determination of the social metabolism, in place of the fetishistic domination of quantity under the conditions of capital's rule over society. Second, because this regulatory principle is *open-ended,* in its *appeal to the future,* both regarding the realization of the *genuinely planned* productive objectives of society at large (without which humanity

could not survive) and the *self-determined aims of life fulfillment* of the particular individuals whose disposable time is made to prevail for the chosen objectives on the basis of their *substantive equality.* And third, because even under the best of conditions, during the ascending phase of systemic development, the required *corrective* functions of capital's state formation—in view of the relative primacy of the material reproductive structures over the political dimension in their inextricable interrelatedness mentioned a little while ago—cannot significantly *change* the overall framework. They can only adjust its operational effectiveness in tune with the unalterable *absolute premise* of the structurally entrenched subordination of labor. The structural defects of the direct material determinations must be *preserved* stronger than ever through the *contradictorily corrective* functions of the state, because capital could not survive without them. And that means imposing on history the destructive imperative of an ultimately quite untenable *stunted dialectic* of failed *Aufhebung* (superseding preservation) in which *preservation* must prevail *at all cost,* at the expense of vitally needed *supersession*. Hence its historically unfolding and ever-intensifying *destructiveness* in the longer run. And in that sense, again, the predetermined imperatives of the *past,* with the established contending nation-states, dominate the *present*.

Thus Hegel, who was a great dialectical thinker, on the most general philosophical terrain could highlight more than anybody else the *conceptual requirements* of *Aufhebung,* But he violated his own principle when he refused to acknowledge the *stunted realization* of necessary *Aufhebung* under the actually existing conditions. In a paradoxical sense he was right to assign the accomplished reality of his modern capitalist nation-states in his philosophy of history to the *temporality of the past*, insisting that the Germanic states constituted "absolutely the end of history." Where he had to be fundamentally corrected by Marx was the Hegelian scheme—the prosaic reality of unresolved contradictions which he could only commend by sanctifying them in the name of the World Spirit—according to which the subsumption of the antagonisms of "civil society" under the wishfully proclaimed "ethical state" represented *Theodicaea,* the *"justification of the ways of God,"*[293] and at the same time the final stage of *"Spirit's perfect embodiment,"*[294] as we have seen.

In this stunted dialectic the ultimate guarantor of the fictitiously projected "positive actuality" of societal reconciliation, the capitalist state had to be idealized even under its most devastatingly problematical aspects. Accordingly, even the technology of modern warfare had to be promoted, in a most astonishing way, by Hegel. We can hardly believe our eyes when we read in his *Philosophy of History* the kind of social-apologetic idealization of the mass-produced instruments of destruction when he presents us with the "philosophical deduction" of modern warfare from what in his

explicitly stated view must be accepted as the apex of the ideally most commendable determinations: *"thought and the universal."*

This is how Hegel tries to convince his readers with the help of a most peculiar philosophical deduction about the pretendedly "superior form of human bravery" displayed in the modern warfare of his idealized nation-states:

> The principle of the modern world—thought and the universal—has *given courage a higher form,* because its display now seems to be more mechanical, the act not of this particular person, but of a member of a whole. Moreover, it seems to be turned not against single persons, but against a hostile *group,* and hence *personal bravery appears impersonal.* It is *for this reason that thought had invented the gun,* and the invention of this weapon, which has changed the purely personal form of bravery into a more abstract one, is no accident.[295]

In this way, through its direct derivation from "the principle of the modern world," the material contingency of ever more powerful modern warfare, rooted in globally expanding capitalist technology, acquires not only its "ideal necessity." It is simultaneously also set above all conceivable criticism in virtue of its full adequacy—"the rationality of the actual"—to that principle. And since morally commendable courage as "intrinsic worth" is inextricably linked by Hegel to the "absolute, final end, the sovereignty of the state,"[296] the apologetic circle of history reaching its culmination in the Germanic "civilizing" state of the capital system, with its ruthlessly efficacious modern warfare "invented by thought" for the sake of realizing, in a suitable "impersonal" form the "image and actuality of reason," is fully closed. One can only wonder, how could Hegel justify, in the name of "being invented by thought and the universal" at an even "more advanced" stage of capitalist development, the use of the *most cowardly* weapon ever produced in human history: *drones,* through which destruction is imposed on countless victims of imperialist aggression, operated by the push of an electronic button from a comfortable office thousands of miles away from the murderous explosions? And how could Hegel ascribe, even with his stunted dialectic, such magnitude of moral depravity to the supreme historical agency of his World Spirit (*Weltgeist*) and its "Absolute Cunning of Reason"?

UNDERSTANDABLY, IN THE MARXIAN approach both the material reproductive structures of capital's "civil society" and the corresponding state formation in its entirety had to be subjected to a radical critique, instead of metamorphosing the historically no longer sustainable past into the postulated insuperable "eternal present" of a stunted dialectic. Given the requirements of not partial but *universal emancipation,*

in contrast to the past historical modalities of "change in personnel," this task could be accomplished only by focusing attention on the vicious circle of capital's material reproductive structures and the corresponding state formations. Accordingly, the radical critique had to be addressed to the *state as such*, and not only to a historically specific form of the state that would leave the underlying structural determinations standing. This is why the *withering away of the state* had to be envisaged as an essential requirement of the productively (on the basis of disposable time) viable global socialist transformation, beyond the structurally entrenched subordination of labor and the destructive antagonisms of the nation-states, be they "Germanic" or whatever else.

One of Marx's great insights into understanding historical development was summed up with his analogy that asserted: "Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape." In this sense Marx insisted:

> Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allow insight into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc.[297]

Marx went on to underline a few paragraphs further on that "the categories express the forms of being, the characteristics of existence."[298] The same consideration can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the problems of the modern state and to the decision-making modalities of the social body in general in past formations. The subject is always humanity in its unfolding history, moving ahead on the insuperable material ground of nature that compels it to reproduce the conditions of its existence within a framework of rules and regulations that can be favorable or, on the contrary, most detrimental to an objectively feasible advancement. The vital importance of the nature of the organs of overall decision-making, in relation to the actually given or feasible mode of controlling the metabolism of societal reproduction, enters the historical picture on this score.

This is not a question of any "ideal state," although it is far from irrelevant that the projection of some ideal overall regulatory system has been a *stubbornly recurrent* theme in the entire history of human thought. The past conceptions of the ideal state cannot be discussed at this point. What matters in the present context is to underline the brutal fact that ever since the prevalence of class exploitation in any form the most iniquitous expropriation and appropriation of the fruits of *surplus labor* provided the

material ground on which historical advancement had to be perversely premised. The regulatory organs of overall decision-making—from slavery and feudal serfdom to the capitalist wage slavery of our time—had to be articulated and consolidated around that *core category* of humanity's social being, which must obviously remain the material ground of societal advancement and human accomplishment in the future. But to be historically sustainable in the future, humanity's positively usable disposable time must be liberated from its class integument.

Regarding the historical past, the deciding factor was not the particular *form* in which surplus labor had been most iniquitously expropriated, and appropriated for their own primary benefit, by the ruling classes. Under capitalism this process assumed the form of the economically regulated extraction and conversion of surplus labor into surplus-value, and the corresponding, ultimately untenable and lethal imperative of its ever-expanded accumulation as destructively self-imposing capital. This specific historical form could be changed under the post-capitalist capital system into the *political extraction* and discriminatory allocation of surplus labor, still at the expense of labor. What mattered always, and continues to matter for as long as the system of superimposed expropriation and domination of surplus labor *in any form* survives, is the *substance* that changes its form. And the overall regulatory framework is inseparable from it. The fundamental issue, therefore, in its material terms of reference, is the expropriation and alienated appropriation of *surplus labor as such,* not just this or that particular form of it, and in terms of the overall political command structure of alienated regulatory determinations today, the *state as such.* The two of them *stand or fall together*. Humanity's *disposable time* cannot be liberated without it. This is the mountain we *must* climb and conquer.

THE PARTICULARLY ACUTE PROBLEM for our time is the necessary and ever more dangerous failure of the *correctives* instituted by the political dimension of societal interaction in the past. As a result of such increasing failure, we are now subjected to the attempt to lock everything into the ever-narrowing vicious circle between capital's structurally entrenched material reproductive determinations and its overall political command structure.

The correctives of capital's state formation were always *problematical*, even in the ascending phase of the system's development, but in the descending phase they have become ever more *adventurist*. Their function in the first place was to keep within manageable limits, i.e., to guard against internally destructive excesses, the *inherent centrifugality* of capital's material determinations, as manifest from the smallest *microcosms* of the material reproductive units (which must "follow their own course") to the most gigantic transnational corporations intent on dominating everything. The

structural defects[299] of the capital system's direct material determinations could never be overcome without weakening, and even undermining, the effectiveness of the self-expansionary material system itself, which is by its innermost nature *expansion-oriented* and *driven by accumulation,* and of course vice versa, according to the prevailing circumstances. In this sense, the state's correctives were always problematical, even if in the ascending phase *systemically constructive.* For they could intervene only within well-marked limits, since their primary mandate was not the *supersession* but the *preservation* of *capital's competitive centrifugality,* on account of its *dynamic* side, which for a long historical period constituted the material force of its irresistible drive forward and successful demolition of all obstacles that stood in the way, to the point of global systemic domination in due course.

Given the *insuperable centrifugality* of capital's material reproductive units, the *cohesiveness* as the *absolute* requirement of *any* social metabolic order could only be achieved, and in the course of massive economic expansion maintained, through the corresponding *all-encroaching* expansion of the system's state formation. Since such cohesion could not be produced on the *substantive* basis of the self-expansionary microcosms of capital's material reproduction, only the *formal universality* of the *state imperatival* determinations could complete capital's mode of social metabolic reproduction as a system. But even this unique way out was feasible only on a *strictly temporary* basis. Until, that is, the *overall systemic limits* of this kind of societal reproduction had to be reached in the course of historical development. Then the limits had to assert themselves with a vengeance both in terms of the necessary *material* requirements of the system's *unlimitable* self-expansionary productive microcosms—deeply affecting in a most *destructive way nature itself*—and of the totalizing political plane of *global interstate relations,* foreshadowing the potentiality of catastrophic destructiveness in the form of yet another all-out military conflagration as witnessed twice in the twentieth century. For the inexorable self-expansionary drive of capital's material structures is not brought to a point of rest by being contained within the *national boundaries*.

The wishful projection of *unproblematical globalization,* most powerfully promoted today by the United States as the dominant *aggressive nation-state,* is the obvious manifestation of this contradiction. But even if the existing nation-states could be somehow put under a common umbrella—by military force or by some kind of formal political agreement—that could only be ephemeral, leaving the underlying contradictions unresolved. For it would still maintain the innermost structural defect of the capital system in its place i.e., the *necessary self-expansionary centrifugality* of its material reproductive microcosms. In other words, even in that way the capital system would today remain totally devoid of an effective and *cohesive operational rationality.*

For several decades the monopolist imperialist stage of capital's descending phase of systemic development was still able to provide a perversely corrective "advancement," in the sense of securing the temporary military triumph of the dominant power or powers, although such "corrective" had to assume an increasingly more destructive form because of its ever greater wars. Thus what used to be only *problematical* but still assertable in the more distant past started to become under the conditions of monopolistic imperialism ever more *prohibitive*, due to its ever-increasing *stakes* coupled with necessarily *diminishing returns*. Inevitably, this kind of development, with its increasing stakes and diminishing returns, pointed toward the prospect of rendering *totally untenable* the assertion of capital's ultimate sanctions against the *externally* denounced, but in its deepest centrifugal structural determinations *internal* systemic antagonist.

It cannot be stressed strongly enough that only the characteristic false consciousness of capital's personifications—which conveniently also provides "self-evident justification" and state-legitimation for the pursued wars—can misrepresent the insoluble *internal* structural determinations and contradictions of the established social and political order as the *externally produced* and militarily disposable contingent threats of an enemy to be subdued. Here again the actual *causal order* is presented upside down, indicating the necessary *consequences* of the underlying systemic determinations as if such consequences were the *real cause* of the periodic conflagrations morally justified in the name of defending the state from "external threat." And, of course, the logical conclusion arising from such upside-down conception of "external threat" also predicates that the necessary collisions in question are perfectly manageable by the customary military conflicts of the "sovereign" nation-states. In reality, the causal determinations and contradictions are *internal* to the very nature of the capital system's unalterable mode of social metabolic control. This is because the incorrigible centrifugality of capital's material determinations, in their irrepressible drive for global extension and domination, could not be contained by—and limited to—any given national boundary. Consequently, sooner or later the irresistible *self-expansionary drive* must assume the form of *interstate collisions,* no matter how destructive they might be, to the point of the two actually experienced global conflagrations in our historical past.

Once the prospect of humanity's total destruction enters the historical horizon, through the nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, the military solution of the fundamental problems of interstate antagonisms—with their deep-seated roots in capital's centrifugal material ground—is made impossible on the *required scale*. Wars can be pursued, *and indeed they are*, on a more limited scale, but not an *all-out war,* which in the past could successfully subdue the adversary,

extracting from it subsequently its resources for the benefit of the victor. Moreover, the unavoidable *all-round destructiveness* inseparable from an *all-out war* fought with the weapons of mass destruction would be so immense that *no rational meaning* could be assigned to the notion of "victor." For under such conditions there could be no more victors. There could be only the *universally defeated.* Thus even this long-established dimension of the *state corrective functions*—namely the ultimate sanction for "enforcing sovereignty by war" in Hegel's idealized state-apologetic sense—which was so vital for the viability of capital's centrifugal order, now totally loses its practicability and meaning. Accordingly, with the *structural crisis* of the capital system in our time we have reached the limits also in this respect.

Naturally, the most extreme neoliberal and neocon "strategic thinkers" of imperialism refuse to take any notice of such developments and continue to indulge in the most absurd projections of waging war in the future, sometimes in the name of openly glorified "liberal imperialism." I discussed some of them in the past,[300] and there is no need to repeat their views here. However, what is particularly striking in all such openly imperialist advocacy of military domination is that the authors fail to understand even the elementary difference between the past economic reality of *all-out wars* and the implications of the necessarily *limited wars*— which must remain limited, short of collective suicide. For the limited wars are not only incapable of bringing the expected returns to the victor, namely to the militarily preponderant United States, but they are in economic terms *counterproductive.* They are counterproductive even if for the time being they provide high profits—at the cost of the state's catastrophic indebtedness and ultimate bankruptcy—to the national/transnational military-industrial complex. It is enough to remember in this respect the sum of more than one *trillion dollars* which the United States had to spend on the Iraq War alone, not to mention all of the others envisaged and happily promoted by these "strategic thinkers." The once practicable economic logic of the *all-out wars* has become totally insane as "economic rationality"—even in General Carl Marie von Clausewitz's sense of "the continuation of politics by other means"—and cannot be made to prevail any longer. For it is simply inconceivable that *any particular country*—no matter how powerful in its military imperialist aspirations—could dominate on a sustainable basis the *entire world*. Yet, that kind of logic is the only "sense" that could be attributed to the aggressive empire-building aspirations propagandized by all such mindless "strategic thinking," projecting the economic viability and commendability of "imperial overstretch" against "imperial understretch," and sloganizing about "premodern failed states" and the "evil axis," as well as promoting at the same time "no exit from occupied territories," and unashamedly glorifying "death and destruction" to be inflicted upon the "failed states."

It would be tempting to dismiss the advocacy of all such nightmarish adventurism on account of its *total irrationality*. To be sure, it is true that the irrational projections of these "strategic thinkers" do not matter in themselves. But they are *symptomatic* of some fundamental contradictions that cannot be ignored. The real concern is the vicious circle of alienated interchange between the material/economic and the political domain of the capital system. This vicious circle counterposes itself to any attempt at finding rationally sustainable solutions to our grave problems. For the reciprocal interchange between the material/economic and the political domain assumes the form of an incorrigibly stunted dialectic, because *one side* in the material ground of the social metabolic process must dominate the other—i.e., exchange value must prevail over use value, quantity over quality, abstract over concrete, formal over substantive, command over execution, and of course, capital over labor. This kind of necessary one-sidedness generates correspondingly one-sided remedies in the political corrective domain, like not only the *facilitating* role played by the state in support of giant transnational corporations (while cynically criticizing monopolism) but also the undertaking of directly state-promoted *monopolistic imperialist expansion at all cost,* including the advocacy of all-out war, instead of rational limits to be set to wasteful and—beyond a certain historical stage even all-destructive—inadmissible capital-expansion.

There can be no solution to this fundamental problem within the parameters of the necessarily antagonistic nation-states constituted through the vicious circle of capital's *stunted historical dialectic*. The key to removing the *causes* of global conflagration can be found in the necessity to overcome on the plane of the *social metabolism itself* the fetishistic domination of one side by the other just mentioned, founded on the structurally entrenched domination of labor by capital and its expropriation of the vital overall controlling functions of the social metabolism.

Capital's centrifugal material ground *could not and cannot* have a historically sustainable overall command structure. Accordingly, the various state formations of the capital system have been constituted in the course of history out of the need to provide a remedy—no matter how contradictory, indeed antagonistic—to this structural defect of the system's social reproductive metabolism by bringing the incorrigibly centrifugal and potentially most disruptive units under some kind of overall control. This solution could be offered on the established systemic ground only by maintaining the *separate/alienated* character of capital's state formations as the overall command structure of the system, without *any* prospect of integrating the material reproductive and the political state-legitimatory control functions. At the same time, the *material reproductive* determinations of the capital system continued—and continue—their unrelenting drive toward *global* integration that *cannot*

be matched in a historically sustainable way by capital's state formations, despite all wishful projection of globalization.

Thus the integrative tendencies as a whole remain incorrigibly truncated on capital's actually existing ground, and the political dimension remains characterized by the antagonistically confrontational overall command structure of the nation-states. In this sense, what was in its original constitution a temporarily (even if for a long historical period necessary) practicable corrective to capital's disruptive material centrifugality becomes a *potentially all-engulfing catastrophic centrifugality* on the global plane, in need of an appropriate global corrective. But a global corrective is inconceivable without overcoming the structural defect of capital's material centrifugality and absolute opposition to a mode of decision making in which the autonomously chosen objectives of the freely associated individuals can be combined with, and truly integrated into, a rationally planned and historically sustainable overall framework.

Conclusion

THIS IS THE SIZE OF THE mountain we *must* climb and conquer. Some time ago I spoke of "Himalayan obstacle." That seems like a real understatement. Our mountain is many Himalayas on top of one another. And there are no native Sherpas to be exploited for the hard work. We must do it ourselves, and we can do it only if we are willing to confont the real stakes and the real obstacles.

The contingencies of our situation, highlighting the limits of our social metabolic order, are not only painful, they are inalterably also *global contingencies*, with their sobering implications. For if the size and the resources of our planet were, say, ten times bigger than they happen to be, in that case capital's destructiveness could be carried on for quite some time. But *they are not* ten times bigger but only as big as they actually are. If nothing else, the ongoing domination and *destruction of nature* should make it palpably clear that *there is a limit to everything*. And capital's absolute limits demonstrate their destructive untenability not only in this respect but also on several other scores.

No ideal or utopian states can be envisaged under the urgency of time. The longing for ideal solutions constantly recurring in the past may tell us something irrepressible about humanity's legitimate aspirations. But they need to be set on more secure foundations.

Despite distorting accusations, no unrealizable ideal claim is involved in the advocacy of the necessary socialist alternative. What that alternative appeals to is the tangible requirement of *historical sustainability*. And that is also offered as the *criterion* and *measure* of its feasible success. In other words, the test of validity is defined in terms of historical viability and practical sustainability, *or not,* as the case might be.

Naturally, no social metabolic order can function without its orienting principles. Indeed their historical sustainability depends on the *practical viability* of their *rival*

orienting principles. This is why the socialist order can only be envisaged on the material ground of the *rationally planned* and determined appropriation of *suplus labor* produced by *each and every one* of society's *freely associated* individuals, who realize and *fulfill their aspirations* in the spirit of their *disposable time*, on the basis of their *substantive equality*, in full *solidarity* with each other and with their *socially shared aspirations*.

That is what makes feasible the *conquest* of the mountain we *must* climb.

Notes

Foreword

1. Chávez first called Mészáros the "Pathfinder" (*Señalador de caminos*)—referring to his role in illuminating the transition to socialism—in an inscription that he wrote in a copy of Simon Rodriguez's *Collected Works* which he gave to Mészáros at a dinner in the Miraflores Palace on September 10, 2001.
2. István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation* (New York: Merlin Press, 1970), 11.
3. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (London: Merlin Press, 1971), *The Young Hegel* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1975).
4. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, xxvi–xxx, 538–39. Lukács emphasized that Hegel's work had also sought to penetrate dialectically into the reifications of natural science, in addition to political economy. He saw the economic reifications, however, as more vital to the understanding of the Hegelian system, and ones that he could more easily address, given the knowledge of physical science that would be necessary to elucidate the former. See *ibid*., xxi–xxii.
5. Marx was never a Hegelian. As early as his doctoral thesis on ancient materialist philosophy the depth of his critique of the Hegelian system is already evident. See John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 51–53.
6. See Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1970), 385–86.
7. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 99–119.
8. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 162–65.
9. István Mészáros, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, vol. 2 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 397; see also chapter 3 below.
10. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 10.
11. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 104, 111.
12. István Mészáros, "Barbarism on the Horizon: An Interview" (conducted by Elenora de Lucena), *MRzine*, December 31, 2013, http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2013/meszaros311213p.html.
13. Ernesto Screpanti, *Global Imperialism and the Great Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 75.
14. The question of the degree to which unit labor costs are converging internationally in a race to the bottom, and the related question of whether or not unequal exchange will continue

to be a fundamental feature of imperialism under capitalism, constitute controversial issues within Marxism today. Various historical tendencies and counter-tendencies are at work with somewhat different trends operative in different regions of the global South—and depending on the size and power of individual countries. For another view see Samir Amin, *The Law of Worldwide Value* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010). What seems irrefutable, as Mészáros argues, is that the rate of exploitation is rising globally, even if this is occurring unevenly between countries.

15. István Mészáros, *The Work of Sartre* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012), 316. In chapter 11 of the present book Mészáros clarifies his use of the term "the descending phase" of the capital system by referring to the "*productively descending* phase" (227). This crucial distinction is meant to highlight the fact that the capital system, while appearing to continue to advance in its own terms, has nonetheless passed objectively from "creative destruction" (to use Schumpeter's famous phrase) to *destructive production*, reflecting the totalizing nature of its structural crisis in which it is caught and the increasing dominance of waste and destruction. I have therefore inserted the word "productively" in brackets in the quoted passage from *The Work of Sartre* to conform to Mészáros's usage in the present book.
16. Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 76–77.
17. István Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995).
18. Daniel Singer, "After Alienation," *The Nation*, June 10, 1996, http://www.thenation.com/article/after-alienation; István Mészáros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 183.
19. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, xxi; Mészáros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital*, 95.
20. István Mészáros, *Historical Actuality of the Socialist Offensive* (London; Bookmarks Publications, 2010), 16; *Beyond Capital*, 91–95, 633–35, 645–72.
21. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 40–58.
22. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 42–47; Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (London: Penguin, 1976), 283; Georg Lukács, *Conversations with Lukács* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1974), 43: *History and Class Consciousness*, xvi.
23. Paul Burkett, *Marx and Nature* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2014); Foster, *Marx's Ecology*, 141–77; John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).
24. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 63.
25. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 65.
26. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 137–39, 141, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, vol. 1, 397, *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, 110.
27. Mészáros, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, 394–97.
28. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 423, 493.
29. Mészáros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital*, 117–46.
30. Michael Lebowitz, "Proposing a Path to Socialism: Two Papers for Hugo Chávez," *Monthly Review* 65, no. 10 (March 2014): 1–19.
31. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 106.
32. István Mészáros, *Socialism or Barbarism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).
33. Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008), 149.

34. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 55.
35. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 62–63.
36. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 30–38; Mészáros, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, vol. 2, 15; Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971).
37. The section on "The Activation of Capital's Absolute Limits" in the present book consists of the introduction to that section of *Beyond Capital*. For his more concrete analysis see Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 152–253.
38. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 170.
39. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 173.
40. Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Utopian or Scientific* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), 39; Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (New York: International Publishers, 1938), 10; Simón Bolívar, "Message to the Congress of Bolivia, May 25, 1826," *Selected Works*, vol. 2 (New York: The Colonial Press, 1951), 603.
41. Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time*, 99.
42. Mészáros, *Beyond Capital*, 566–79. The concept of "precariousness" was central to Marx's theory of the reserve army of labor. See John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, *The Endless Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012).
43. Chapter 4; Mészáros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital*, 49–50. See also John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, "Surveillance Capitalism," *Monthly Review* 66, no. 3 (July–August 2014): 1–31.
44. In his economic analysis of monopoly, stagnation, and debt Mészáros relies on such important Marxian political-economic critiques as Paul A. Baran and Paul M. Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1966) and Harry Magdoff and Paul M. Sweezy, *The Irreversible Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988).
45. Mészáros, *Historical Actuality of the Socialist Offensive*, 22; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 122–207; Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
46. Mészáros, *The Structural Crisis of Capital*, 114–16; *Beyond Capital*, 580–86.
47. Mészáros, *Historical Actuality of the Socialist Offensive*, 34. See the similar observations in Samir Amin, "Popular Movements toward Socialism," *Monthly Review* 66, no. 2 (June 2014): 5–7.
48. Mészáros, *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time*, 238.
49. The use of a historical materialist critique in this work to show the limitations of the main forms of bourgeois thought is similar to that of Georg Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason* (London: Merlin Press, 1980). Yet, while Lukács had confined his treatment to irrationalism, Mészáros provides a dialectical critique of the main forms of liberal thought as a whole. See also István Mészáros, *The Power of Ideology* (London: Zed Books, 2005).
50. Mészáros, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, vol. 1, 426, vol. 2, 15, 253–54.
51. Singer, "After Alienation."

The Necessity of Social Control

1. Isaac Deutscher, *The Unfinished Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1967), 110–14. *Marx's Theory of Alienation* by István Mészáros was awarded the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize in 1970. The first Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, on The Necessity of Social

Control, was delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on 26 January 1971 and was published as a separate volume, under the same title, by Merlin Press, London, 1971.

2. W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non–Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), 157–164.
3. People often forget that President Kennedy was directly responsible for the escalating U.S. involvement in Vietnam, inaugurating a whole series of disastrous policies conceived on the basis of "theories" like the one quoted above.
4. Here is a graphic example of tautological apologetics based on a retrospective reconstruction of the past in the key of an idealized present of U.S. capitalism:

   > The relative interwar stagnation in Western Europe was due not to long-run diminishing return but to the *failure* of Western Europe to create a setting in which its national societies moved promptly into the age of high mass consumption, yielding new leading sectors. And this *failure,* in turn, was due mainly to a *failure* to create initial full employment in the post-1920 setting of the terms of trade. Similarly the protracted depression of the United States in the 1930s was due not to long–run diminishing returns, but to a *failure* to create an initial renewed setting of full employment, through public policy, which *would have permitted* the new leading sectors of suburban housing, the diffusion of automobiles, durable consumers' goods and services to roll forward beyond 1929. (Rostow, op. cit., 155.)

   Thus "failures" (crises and recessions) are explained by the "failure" to realize the conditions that "would have permitted" the avoidance of those unfortunate "failures," by producing the present-day pattern of capitalist "high–consumption" which is, of course, the ne plus ultra of everything. How those unfortunate, failure-explanatory failures came into being, we are not told. Since, however, the point of the whole exercise is the propagation of Rostow's "objective" and "non-parochial" *non–Communist Manifesto* as the ultimate salvation of U.S.-dominated world capitalism, by implication we can take it that the "failures" in question must have been due to the absence of this retrospective-tautological economico-political wisdom. By what "failures" he would explain today's rising unemployment and the associated symptoms of serious structural disturbances in the United States as well as in other parts of the capitalist world of "high mass consumption," "suburban housing," etc., must remain, unfortunately, a mystery to us, since there are no "new leading sectors" in sight whose creation "would have permitted" the avoidance of present-day failures.
5. Ibid., 163.
6. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Collected Works (MECW) vol. 5, 55–56.
7. Ibid., 56.
8. I have discussed several related problems in "Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness," my contribution to *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness,* essays by Tom Bottomore, David Daiches, Lucien Goldmann, Arnold Hauser, E. J. Hobsbawm, Ralph Miliband, Rudolf Schlesinger, Anthony Thorlby, ed. I. Mészáros (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971); reprinted in István Mészáros, *Philosophy, Ideology and Social Science,"* Harvester Press, Brighton, UK, 1986, 57–104.
9. See Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie,* Berlin, 1953, 593–94.
10. This is how the *Voice of America* introduces its program of interviews with intellectuals on "Man and his Survival":

> The order of importance of great tasks has changed. Today no longer the clash of *national interests*, or the struggle for *political power* occupy the first place; nor indeed the elimination of *social injustice.* The outstanding issue by now is whether or not mankind will succeed in securing the conditions of its survival in a world it has transformed. . . . No wonder that the President of the United States has dedicated two-thirds of his latest State of the Union message to the question of how to rehabilitate the environment from pollution. What happens, though, if man, instead of thinking about his own survival, *wastes his energies in fighting for the relative truth of various ideologies and social–political systems?* What are the first steps mankind ought to take in order *to reform itself and the world?*

Further comment is quite unnecessary, thanks to the transparency of these lines.

11. A capability so far very effectively paralyzed by the guardians of the ruling order. For a penetrating analysis of the dynamic potentialities of the "mass media," see Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," *New Left Review* 64 (Nov.–Dec. 1970):13–36.
12. E. J. Mishan, *The Cost of Economic Growth,* Penguin Books, 1969, 225.
13. *Der Spiegel,* 6 November 1957.
14. On Saturday, March 17, 1883, the London *Times* published the following notice:

> *Our Paris correspondent informs us of the death of Dr. Karl Marx, which occurred last Wednesday, in London.* He was born at Cologne, in the year 1818. At the age of 25 he had to leave his native country and take refuge in France, on account of the Radical opinions expressed in a paper of which he was editor. In France he gave himself up to the study of philosophy and politics, and made himself so obnoxious to the Prussian Government by his writings, that he was expelled from France, and lived for a time in Belgium. In 1847 he assisted at the Working Men's Congress in London, and was one of the authors of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party." After the Revolution of 1848 he returned to Paris, and afterwards to his native city of Cologne, from which he was again expelled for his revolutionary writings, and after escaping from imprisonment in France, he settled in London. From this time he was one of the leaders of the Socialist Party in Europe, and in 1866 he became its acknowledged chief. He wrote pamphlets on various subjects, but his chief work was *"Le Capital,"* an attack on the whole capitalist system. For some time he had been suffering from weak health.

What is remarkable about this piece is not only its provenance from Paris but also the way in which the class solidarity of international capital is revealed in it through reporting the concerted reactions of governments (the Prussian government is annoyed—thus the French government acts) to the "obnoxiousness" of the man who dared to write "an attack on the whole capitalist system."

15. Editorial, *Times,* 17 October 1970.
16. Ibid., 20 October 1970.
17. Marx's comments on the Prussian censorship instructions throw an interesting light on this "liberal" mode of arguing:

> "Nothing will be tolerated which opposes Christian religion in general or a particular doctrine in a frivolous and hostile manner." How cleverly put: *frivolous, hostile*. The adjective "frivolous" appeals to the *citizen's sense of propriety* and is the exoteric term

in the *public view;* but the adjective "hostile" is whispered into the *censor's ear* and becomes the *legal interpretation* of frivolity.

In our quotation the corresponding terms are: "the influence of society" (for the citizen's sense of propriety) and "all the power of government" (for the authoritarian state official's ear).

18. As the editors of the *Trade Union Register* rightly emphasize:

> The similarities between the two documents [i.e., the Tory *Fair Deal at Work* and Labour's *In Place of Strife*] are considerable, and certainly more substantial than their differences. This consensus reflects the whole tendency in orthodox political circles to assume that workers (not necessarily trade unions) have too much freedom and power in the exercise of strike action and other forms of industrial collective pressure, and that it is legitimate for the state to legislate with a view to restraining and limiting those freedoms and powers. In view of the enormous recent increases in the authority and influence of the state itself, and of large irresponsible private industrial and commercial companies, against which the independent forces of organized labour alone stand as a guarantee of ultimate civic and political liberties, the consensus view prevailing in the political parties of the center and right requires the most vigorous and thorough opposition from the labour movement.

Trade Union Register 1970, Merlin Press, London, 1970, 276.

19. Barbara Castle, "The Bad Bosses" Charter," *New Statesman,* 16 October 1970.

20. When Mr. Heath nationalizes Rolls-Royce (after his repeated denunciation of the measure of nationalization as a "doctrinaire socialist nonsense"), all he carries out is, of course, nothing but the "*nationalization" of capitalist bankruptcy* in a key sector of commodity production. The fact that the immediate cause of this step was a contract negotiated by the outgoing Labour Government (envisaging the balancing of enormous private losses from public funds), only highlights the surrender of both parties to the dictates of the prevailing capitalist structure of production. Such dictates prescribe the transference of the non-profitable branches of industry into the "public" (i.e., state-bureaucracy-controlled) sector so that they can be turned into further subsidies at the service of monopoly capital. Thankfully, this particular act of "nationalization" has been carried out by a Conservative government—which makes it a less mystifying event. For had it been implemented by a Labour government, it would have been loudly hailed as a great landmark of "pragmatic socialism."

21. Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy,* Lawrence & Wishart, London, n.d., 123.

22. They are in the process of disintegration precisely because—due to their inherent contradictions—they are unable to cope with the vital functions they are supposed to carry out in the totality of social intercourse.

23. This interview was published in the British journal *Radical Philosophy* 62 (Autumn 1992) and later in a somewhat abbreviated version in *Monthly Review* 44/11 (April 1993). The interview was conducted in April 1992. The text here is the same as published in *Monthly Review*.

24. This chapter is taken from my book *Beyond Capital,* 104–18, published in 1995. I have discussed at some length the vital problems of capital's second order mediations in my book on *Marx's Theory of Alienation,* written between 1959 and 1969, and published by Merlin Press in London in 1970.

25. Ibid.

26. "Si le journalier est misérable la nation est misérable," Diderot's entry on *Journalier* in the *Encyclopédie.*

27. Diderot, *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville,* in *Oeuvres Philosophiques,* ed. Paul Vernière, Paris 1956, 482. Diderot's italics. In contrast to Diderot, Rousseau was anxious to defend himself against accusations that his work could be read as an attack on the sanctity of *"meum et tuum,"* asserting that "the right of property is the most sacred of all the rights of citizenship, and even more important in some respects than liberty itself." Rousseau, *A Discourse on Political Economy,* Everyman, 254.
28. Diderot, op. cit., 468.
29. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* 457.
30. Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, 288.
31. Ibid.
32. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 212.
33. Ibid., 211.
34. This chapter is taken from my book *Beyond Capital* (142–52), published in 1995.
35. Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, Introduction," MECW, vol. 3, 182–83.
36. Ibid.
37. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* in *Selected Works,* Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1958, vol. 1, 62.
38. See the activities of the Club of Rome and in particular their famous publication, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome Project on the Predicament of Mankind,* by Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III, with a Preface by William Watts, president of Potomac Associates. A Potomac Associates Book, Earth Island Limited, London, 1972.
39. Ibid., 171.
40. True to form, in this book the social dimension of the identified issues is avoided in the name of "complexity," by insisting that "the major problems facing mankind are of such complexity and are so interrelated that traditional institutions and policies are no longer able to cope with them" (9–10). Ironically, the result of adopting this approach in the interest of eternalizing the rule of the capital system (the globally equilibrating aim stipulated in the report for mankind is to make "population and capital essentially stable") is that the method of computerized modelling offered to intellectually master the claimed "complexity and interrelatedness" can yield only self-defeating vacuity. Thus we learn in the concluding section of this "Report on the Predicament of Mankind":

    > The report presents in straightforward form the alternative confronting not one nation or people but all nations and peoples, thereby compelling a reader to raise his sights to the dimensions of *the world problématique.* A drawback of this approach is of course that—given the heterogeneity of world society, national political structures, and levels of development—the conclusions of the study, although valid for our planet as a whole, do not apply in detail to any particular country or region. (188)

    A most helpful and reassuring conclusion indeed.
41. See the interview with Professor J. Forrester of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in *Le Monde,* 1 August 1972; see also his book, *World Dynamics,* Wright-Allen Press, Cambridge, MA, 1971.
42. The relevant sections of chapter 5 of *Beyond Capital* are: 5.1 Transnational Capital and National States; 5.2 The Destruction of the Conditions of Social Metabolic Reproduction;

5.3 Women's Liberation: The Challenge of Substantive Equality; and 5.4 Chronic Unemployment: The Real Meaning of "Population Explosion" (152–253).

43. Characteristically, even the feeble resolutions of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference—watered down almost to the point of meaninglessness under the pressure of the dominant capitalist powers, primarily the United States whose delegation was headed by President Bush—are used only as an *alibi* for carrying on as before, doing nothing to meet the challenge while pretending to "fulfill the obligations undertaken." Thus we may note the shameful hypocrisy with which the British government tried to justify in 1994 the 17.5 percent Value Added Tax imposed on domestic fuel consumption—hitting above all the poor and the low-income pensioners—under the pretense of environmental concern, with reference to the Rio Summit. In reality this highly unpopular measure—which cynically turned the Conservative Party's solemn electoral pledge of tax reduction into its diametrical opposite—was imposed in an effort to reduce the £50 billion annual budgetary deficit, without any expectation whatsoever that the increased burden of tax will reduce energy consumption and the negative consequences of continuing energy production with the same, highly polluting methods.
44. "The Present Crisis" was written in August 1987 and published in the Brazilian periodical *Ensaio* 17–18 (1989): 159–71, and in English, with the 1995 Postscript added, in *Beyond Capital*, London, 1995, 952–64. I ended the 1987 article by quoting from "U.S. Trade Deficit Hits Quarterly Record," *Financial Times*, 27 August 1987:

    > Mr. Robert Heller, Federal Reserve Governor, said yesterday that the U.S. economy was becoming more balanced, noting that "what we are seeing is a healthy continuation of the current economic expansion."

    And I commented: "If $188.52 billions annual balance of trade deficit, coupled with astronomical budgetary deficits, can be considered 'the healthy continuation of economic expansion,' one shudders to think what will the unhealthy condition of the economy look like when we reach it." Before long we received the answer from the Stock Exchanges.
45. Andrew Lorenz and Frank Kane, "Barings Seeks Rescue Buyer," *Sunday Times,* 26 February 1995.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. "Where a Slump Might Start," *The Economist,* 17 June 1995.
49. See Walter Bello, Shea Cunningham, and Bill Rau, *Dark Victory: The United States, Structural Adjustment, and Global Poverty,* Institute for Food and Development Policy, Oakland, CA, 1994. Quote from Martin Hart-Landsberg, "Dark Victory: Capitalism Unchecked," *Monthly Review* 54 (March 1994).
50. "The G7 at an Impasse," *Financial Times*, 28 April 1992.
51. This chapter is taken from my book *Socialism or Barbarism: From the "American Century" to the Crossroads,* written in 1999. Chapters 1 and 2 of this book were presented in Athens on October 19, 1999, at a conference organized by the Greek bimonthly *OYTOPIA* (Utopia), edited by E. I. Bitsakis, and printed in Greek in that magazine in March 2000. The full text was first published in book form in Italian, by the Milan publishing house Punto Rosso, in September 2000, and the first complete English edition appeared in June 2001, published by Monthly Review Press, New York.
52. Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1957, vii.
53. *The Economist,* 17 November 1957.

54. The *Observer*'s comment on Roosevelt's "First Inaugural Address," delivered in Washington DC, 4 March 1933, quoted in *Nothing to Fear: The Selected Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932–1945,* ed. B. D. Zevin, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1947, 13.
55. F. D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address," 4 March 1933.
56. F. D. Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress," Washington DC, 11 January 1944.
57. P. C. No. 992, 23 February 1945, quoted in Thomas H. Greer, *What Roosevelt Thought: The Social and Political Ideas of Franklin D. Roosevelt,* Angus & Robertson, London, 1958, 169.
58. Ibid.
59. F. D. Roosevelt, "Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Statue of Liberty," New York City, 28 October 1936.
60. Harry Magdoff, *The Age of Imperialism: The Economics of US Foreign Policy,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1966, 15.
61. Roosevelt did not try to hide that he wanted to justify his actions in the name of a warlike emergency. As he put it: "I shall ask the Congress for broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe." F. D. Roosevelt, "First Inaugural Address."
62. F. D. Roosevelt, "Second Inaugural Address," Washington DC, 20 January 1937. Roosevelt in his "New Deal Speech" also argued, in the same spirit, that little of the generated profit was "devoted to the reduction of prices. The *consumer was forgotten.* Very little of it went into increased wages; *the worker was forgotten,* and by no means an adequate proportion was even paid out in dividends—*the stockholder was forgotten."* The question *why* they were forgotten was not asked. The only thing that mattered was that now they are *remembered,* and therefore everything can and will be put right. What is missing from such discourse is the acknowledgment of overwhelming objective *incompatibilities.* This is what makes the Rooseveltian discourse on numerous occasions unrealistically rhetorical.
63. Daniel B. Schirmer, *Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War,* Schenkman Books, Rochester, VT, n.d., 1–3. The author also makes clear, faithful to its original historical context, why the anti–imperialist movement at the turn of the century had to fail: "In 1902 George S. Boutwell, the chairman of the anti-imperialist league and erstwhile associate of Lincoln, concluded that the leadership of a successful struggle against imperialism was to lie in the hands of labor. He told a Boston audience of trade unionists: 'The final effort for the salvation of the republic is to be made by the laboring and producing classes.' If this was to be the case, it was obvious that American labor, at the moment, was not ready to shoulder its responsibility, dominated as it was by men like Gompers, who were unfolding a policy of conciliation with the trusts and support for their foreign policy. Whatever the future would hold for Boutwell's belief, at the time he spoke the ant-imperialists were declining in influence; they represented an ideology without a stable and growing social base" (258).
64. The issue was not confined to French Indochina. Roosevelt's attitude was equally dismissive of would-be French aspirations for retaining possession of their North African colonies, notably Morocco. See in this respect his letter to Cordell Hull, dated 24 January 1944, quoted on 168 of T. H. Greer's book cited above.
65. See Democratic senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan's notorious book *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Relations,* Oxford University Press, 1993.
66. Noam Chomsky, "The Current Bombings," *Spectre* 7 (Summer 1999): 18.
67. Jeffrey Sachs, "Helping the World's Poorest," *The Economist,* 14 August 1999, 16 and 22.

68. Characteristically, *The Economist* in its editorial on poverty in the "underdeveloped world" lays the stress on municipal matters ("reliable water supplies"—to be obtained through "water sellers," rather than "by struggling to install expensive piped supplies to the home," "safe drains" and "regular rubbish collections"), concluding that "The *main answers* lie in making *local government* more efficient and more accountable." ("Helping the Poorest," *The Economist,* 14 August 1999, 11.) The truth is, of course, that the local governments of the countries in question are hopelessly handicapped by the resources made available to them by their national governments, which in their turn are most iniquitously locked into the self-perpetuating structural hierarchies of the global capital system.
69. Michael Heseltine's ministerial resignation statement, 9 January 1986, quoted in I. Mészáros, "The Present Crisis" (1987), reprinted in Part 4 of *Beyond Capital,* 952–64.
70. Ibid., 952.
71. Ibid., 954–58.
72. The good intentions of Jeffrey Sachs are clear when he writes that "the global regime on intellectual property rights requires a new look. The United States prevailed upon the world to toughen patent codes and cut down on intellectual piracy. But now transnational corporations and rich-country institutions are patenting everything from the human genome to rainforest biodiversity. The poor will be ripped off unless some *sense and equity* are introduced into this runaway process." (J. Sachs, op. cit., 22.) However, he becomes hopelessly unrealistic when he describes the determinations behind the criticized policies as *"amazingly misguided"* (16). There is nothing "misguided" about such policies, let alone "amazingly misguided," which suggests that they can be remedied by a good dose of rational illumination (like Roosevelt's "remembering" of what has been "forgotten"). On the contrary, they are embodiments of callously deliberate, well-calculated, and ruthlessly imposed decisions, emanating from capital's structurally safeguarded hierarchies and objective imperatives. Again, the real issue is not the absence of the—now happily supplied—rational insight but the reality of overpowering *incompatibilities*: in Sachs's case that between "sense and equity." For what "sense" approved by Sachs would recommend, the radical exclusion of all possible considerations of "equity" by him must absolutely deny. This is why Jeffrey Sachs's article—given the author's reverent attitude to "market society" (which cannot be even called by its proper name of *capitalist market*)—ends up with a totally fictitious "market solution."
73. Renato Constantino, *Identity and Consciousness: The Philippine Experience,* Malaya Books, Quezon City, 1974, 6. The Americans relinquished direct control of the Filipino educational system only in 1935, by which time they were exercising very effective control over it indirectly.
74. On the disastrous U.S. involvement in Vietnam, see Gabriel Kolko's seminal book *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War, 1940–1975,* Allen & Unwin, London, 1986.
75. Andreas Papandreou told me in 1973 how he was released from the colonels' jail. A former member of President Kennedy's brain trust, John Kenneth Galbraith, to his honor, went to see President Lyndon Johnson and pleaded with him on behalf of his old Harvard University friend. Johnson called in his secretary and asked her to connect him with the U.S. ambassador in Athens. It was done on the spot and Johnson said to the ambassador: "Tell those sons of a bitch to release this good man, Papandreou, immediately," which they did. For they knew very well who was really in charge in Greece.

76. This was reported in *The Economist* only a few weeks before the overthrow of Mobutu's regime. The full sentence quoted by *The Economist* was: "We know that he is a son of a bitch, but he is *our* son of a bitch."
77. István Mészáros, "Radical Politics and Transition to Socialism: Reflections on Marx's Centenary," first published in the Brazilian periodical *Escrita Ensaio* 5/11–12 (Summer 1983): 105–24. A shorter version of this article was delivered as a lecture in Athens in April 1983. The article is reprinted in full in Part IV of *Beyond Capital,* 937–51, quote on 943–44.
78. Shoji Niihara, "Struggle Against US Military Bases," *Dateline Tokyo* 73 (July 1999): 2.
79. József Ambrus, "A polgári védelem feladatai" (The Tasks of Civil Defense), in a special issue of *Ezredforduló* dedicated to the problems of Hungary's entry into NATO, *Strategic Enquiries of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,* 1999, 32.
80. For a notable exception see John Manning's letter to *Spectre* 6 (Spring 1999): 37–38. On a related issue see *US Military Bases in Japan: A Japan US Dialogue,* Report from the Boston Symposium, April 25, 1998, Cambridge, MA.
81. Comparing Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi to leading opposition figure Fuwa, *The Economist* grudgingly wrote: "Events so far tended to show Mr Obuchi as a bumbling amateur, especially when grilled by consummate professionals such as Tetsuzo Fuwa." In "A Pity about Uncle Obuchi," *The Economist,* 20 November 1999, 97–98.
82. Tetsuzo Fuwa, "Address to Japan Peace Committee in Its 50th Year," *Japan Press Weekly,* 3 July 1999, 15.
83. This is already happening as Japan is compelled to pay for the massive cost of U.S. military occupation through their numerous bases in the country. "Costs that the Japanese government bore in 1997 for maintaining US bases in Japan reached 4.9 billion US dollars, ranking first among other countries of the world (according to the 'Allied Contribution to the Common Defense, 1999 Report'). For each US soldier stationed in Japan, this is 122,500 US dollars" (S. Niihara, op. cit., 3).
84. *Akahata*, 1 November 1999, quoted in *Japan Press Weekly*, 6 November 1999, 6–7.
85. S. Niihara, op. cit., 3.
86. "Washington Tells China to Back Off or Risk Cold War," *Daily Telegraph,* 16 May 1999, 15. The same article also tells us that "the spate of espionage stories seems to have been leaked by figures within the Republican Party or the Pentagon who see it in the long-term interests of the United States to have one big enemy." Obviously, Saddam Hussein is not big enough in regard to the ideological requirements and the increasing military expenditure corresponding to the long-term design of the aggressive U.S. imperialist posture.
87. Jonathan Story, "Time Is Running Out for the Solution of the Chinese Puzzle," *Sunday Times,* 1 July 1999, 25.
88. Ibid. Jonathan Story's article is an extract from his book *The Frontiers of Fortune,* published by Financial Times-Prentice Hall, London, 1999.
89. The importance of Turkey as a U.S. "local assistant" has been dramatically exposed in spring 1999 with the ignominious consignment of Ocalan, the leader of the Kurdish PKK, to Ankara, under great U.S. pressure, humiliating the various European "local assistants" involved in this affair. See Luigi Vinci, *La socialdemocrazia e la sinistra antagonista in Europa*, Edizioni Punto Rosso, Milano, 1999, 13. See also Fausto Bertinotti, *Per una società alternativa: Intervista sulla politica, sul partito e sulle culture critiche,* interviewed by Giorgio Riolo. Edizioni Punto Rosso, Milan, 1999, 30–31.

90. The quotations in this paragraph are all from "The New Geopolitics," *The Economist,* 31 July 1999, 15–16.
91. David Watts, "Howard's 'Sheriff' Role Angers Asians," *Times.* 27 September 1999. 14.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Jonathan Story, op. cit., 33.
95. See David Cay Johnston, "Gap between Rich and Poor Found Substantially Wider," *New York Times*, 5 September 1999.
96. "Worried in Beijing," *The Economist,* 7 August 1999, 14.
97. Ibid. The necessary overthrow of China is several times eagerly prognosticated in this puny, less than one-page-long, editorial article.
98. See a thought-provoking discussion of these problems in Luigi Vinci's volume quoted above, in particular 60–66.
99. "Superpower Europe," *The Economist,* 17 July 1999, 14.
100. Rupert Cornwell, "Europe Warned Not to Weaken NATO," *Independent,* 8 October 1999, 18.
101. Ibid.
102. This chapter is based on a lecture delivered at the Cultural Forum of the Latin American Parliaments' "Summit on the Social Debt and Latin American Integration," held in Caracas, Venezuela, July 10–13, 2001.
103. It is enough to think of two recent examples: (1) the practical disenfranchising of countless millions, due to apathy or manipulation, and the electoral farce witnessed after the last U.S. presidential election and (2) the lowest ever participation of voters in the June 2001 General Election in Britain, producing a grotesquely inflated parliamentary majority of 169 for the government party with the votes of less than 25 percent of the electorate. The spokesmen of the winning party, refusing to listen to the British electorate's clearly warning message, boasted that "New Labour" had achieved a "landslide victory." Shirley Williams aptly commented that what we were witnessing was not a *landslide* but a *mudslide*.
104. See David Cay Johnston, "Gap between Rich and Poor Found Substantially Wider," *New York Times*, September 5, 1999.
105. Henry Home (Lord Kames), *Loose Hints upon Education, Chiefly Concerning the Culture of the Heart,* Edinburgh & London, 1781, 284.
106. Diderot, entry on *Journalier* in the *Encyclopédie.*
107. Rousseau, *A Discourse on Political Economy,* Everyman, London, n.d., 264. Rousseau also categorically stated that "*liberty cannot exist without equality"* in *The Social Contract,* Everyman, 42.
108. Vico, *The New Science,* translated from the third edition (1744), Doubleday, New York, 1961, 3.
109. Thomas Münzer, *Hochverursachte Schutzrede und Antwort wider das geistlose, sanftlebende Fleisch zu Wittenberg, welches mit verkehrter Weise durch den Diebstahl der heiligen Schrift die erbärmliche Christenheit also ganz jämmerlich besudelt hat* (1524), quoted by Marx in his essay on "The Jewish Question."
110. In other words, we end up with a double circularity, produced by the most iniquitous actual historical development: "liberty" is defined as (abstractly postulated but in real substance utterly fictitious) "contractual equality," and "equality" is exhausted in the vague desideratum of a "liberty" to aspire at being granted nothing more than the formally proclaimed but socially nullified "equality of opportunity."

111. From Part Two, Act 5, of Goethe's *Faust*. English translation by Philip Wayne, Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1959. English quotations are from 267–70 of this volume.
112. The direct inspiration for Balzac's novella was a long tale by an Irish Anglican clergyman, the descendant of a French Huguenot priest who fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This work, by Charles Robert Maturin, curate of St. Peter's, Dublin, titled *Melmoth the Wanderer,* was first published in Dublin in 1820, and immediately translated into French. (Recent edition by Folio Society, London, 1993, xvii, 506, with an Introduction by Virendra Varma.) The big difference is that though Maturin's wandering Melmoth in the end cannot escape hell, Balzac's very different way of approaching the Faust legend, with devastating irony and sarcasm, transfers the story on a radically different plane, putting into relief a vital determination of our social order.
113. This chapter is the Introduction, written between August 2003 and February 2004, to the second edition of my book *The Power of Ideology,* published in 2004.
114. J. M. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion,* 324.
115. Ibid., 372.
116. Ibid., 370.
117. Ibid., 372.
118. John Pilger, *The New Rulers of the World,* Verso, London, 2003, 2.
119. See chap. 12 of Daniel Singer's important book *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1999.
120. Ibid., 259.
121. István Mészáros, *The Necessity of Social Control,* the first Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science on January 26, 1971, and published as a separate volume by Merlin Press in London in 1971; quote is at 54–55.
122. The interested reader can find a detailed analysis of these problems in my *Beyond Capital. Toward a Theory of Transition,* written between 1970 and 1995 and published by Merlin Press in London and Monthly Review Press in New York in 1995. See in particular chap. 5, "The Activation of Capital's Absolute Limits," 142–253.
123. *The Power of Ideology*, 1st ed., Harvester/Wheatsheaf, London, and New York University Press, New York, 1989, 460–461.
124. Ibid., 430.
125. Ibid., 421.
126. Ibid., 415.
127. Ibid., 460.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid., 435.
130. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1942, 212.
131. In a biting comment on Kant's views, Hegel insisted, "Corruption in nations would be the product of prolonged, let alone 'perpetual' peace." Ibid., 210.
132. Ibid., 212.
133. Renato Constantino, "Time Warp," *Manila Bulletin*, June 16, 1996.
134. "An abstract presentation of the question of nationalism in general is of no use at all. A distinction must be necessarily made between *the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation*." In "The Question of Nationalities or 'Autonomization,'" Lenin, *Collected Works,* vol. 36, 607.

Moreover, Lenin adopted the general principle spelled out by Marx in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, according to which the only way to redress the violations of equality is to make "equality unequal," that is, favoring the disadvantaged. As Lenin put it: "It is better to overdo rather than underdo the concessions and leniency toward the national minorities. That is why, in this case, the fundamental interest of proletarian solidarity, and consequently of the proletarian class struggle, requires that we never adopt a formal attitude to the national question, but always take into account the specific attitude of the proletarian of the oppressed (or small) nations toward the oppressor (or great) nation." Ibid., 609.

135. "Un entretien avec Renato Constantino," *Le Monde,* February 8, 1994.
136. Lenin, op. cit., 36:606.
137. Ibid., 36:610.
138. Ibid., 36:608.
139. See my discussion of these problems in "The Dramatic Reappearance of the National Question," part of an article titled "Socialismo hoy dia," written in December 1989–January 1990 for the Venezuelan quarterly periodical *El ojo del huracán* and published in the February/March/April 1990 issue. Republished in English in Part IV of *Beyond Capital*, 965–76.
140. Julian V. Bromlei, "Ethnic Relations and Perestroika," *Perestroika Annual,* Futura/Macdonald London 1989, vol. 2, 119. Julian Bromlei was at the time chairman of the Inter-Departmental Scientific Council on the Studies of Ethnic Processes of the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences.
141. Engels, letter to August Bebel, 18–28 March 1875.
142. Rosa Luxemburg, *Junius Pamphlet,* A Young Socialist Publication, Colombo, 1967, 54.
143. Marx and Engels, MECW, vol. 5, 73.
144. See Marx, letter to Engels, October 8, 1858.
145. T*he German Ideology,* MECW, vol. 5, 45.
146. For a fuller discussion of these problems see *Beyond Capital*, chap. 5.1, "Transnational Capital and National States," 152–70.
147. Readers of *The Power of Ideology* will find the differences indicated throughout the book.
148. *The Power of Ideology*, 373.
149. Reference to the words of a former head of General Motors, quoted in Harry Magdoff, *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1978, 180.
150. *The Power of Ideology*, 376 and 380.
151. For a discussion of the philosophical conceptions at the core of the conservative advocacy of "little by little," as an attempt to justify its a prioristic rejection of any idea of a comprehensive change, see my article "The Nature of Historical Determination," *Critique* 30–31, 1998, 91–123. Also available in my book on *The Dialectic of Structure and History,* New York. Monthly Review Press, 2011.
152. See chap. 8, *The Power of Ideology*, "The Constitution of Solidarity," esp. section 8.5, "Bernstein's Representative Blind Alley."
153. *The Power of Ideology,* 431.
154. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome Project on the Predicament of Mankind,* Potomac Associates Book, Earth Island Ltd, London, 1972, 171.
155. See the interview with Professor Jay Forrester of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in *Le Monde,* 1 August 1972.
156. For a detailed discussion of these problems, see in *Beyond Capital,* chap. 15, "The Decreasing Rate of Utilization under Capitalism," and chap. 16, "The Decreasing Rate of Utilization and the Capitalist State," 547–600.

157. Philip Buonarroti, *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf*, Brussels, 1828, 297. See also 384–85 and n.844 in *The Power of Ideology.*
158. *The Power of Ideology,* 464.
159. MECW, vol. 5, 83.
160. Harry Magdoff, interviewed by Huck Gutman, "Creating a Just Society: Lessons from Planning in the U.S.S.R. & the U.S.," *Monthly Review* (October 2002): 2. Magdoff adds a couple of pages further on: "Let me emphasize the way the plan was developed and the politics that came with it. I think that the separation between the planners, technicians and economists, and the powerful political bureau of the Party, was an important element in the difficulties that developed. First of all, nonspecialists were making the economic decisions, basing them on political decisions about what was best from the standpoint of show, though of course behind it was the feeling that it was the best for the people. But at the same time a political system resembling a war economy was already being established."
161. For a critique of some shocking decisions and their incorrigible consequences, see my book *Satire and Reality*, completed in 1954 and published in Hungarian, by Sz. K. K. in Budapest, in January 1955. The relevant passages on the criticized planning process are reported in my study: "La teoría económica y la política: más allá del capital," in *Revista BCV Foros* 7 (2002): 315.
162. John Kenneth Galbraith idealized the corporatist planning process to such an extent, closing at the same time not one eye but both to the deficiencies of Soviet-type planning, that he confidently predicted the coming *convergence* of the two systems, instead of the restoration of capitalism in the U.S.S.R. For a critical analysis of his theories, see chap. 2.3 of *The Power of Ideology,* "The Fallacy of Technological Solutions to Social Problems," 65–76 and 483–86.
163. See chap. 2.2 of *The Power of Ideology,* "The Premature Theorization of the End of Scarcity."
164. Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, MECW, vol. 5, 4.
165. Antonio Gramsci, "The Formation of Intellectuals," in *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1957, 121.
166. This problem is fully discussed in chap. 19 of *Beyond Capital,* "The Communal System and the Law of Value," 739–70.
167. Isabel Rauber, *America Latina: Movimientos sociales y representación politica,* Pasado y Presente XXI, Buenos Aires, 2003, 44.
168. *The Power of Ideology*, 378–79.
169. Ibid., 380.
170. See chap. 1.2 of *The Power of Ideology,* "From 'Modernity' to the 'Crisis of Postmodernity,'" 14–46.
171. Ibid., 470.
172. First published in Portuguese in 2007 by Boitempo Editorial in São Paulo, Brazil, and in English by Monthly Review Press, New York, 2008, as *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time.*
173. *Beyond Capital,* 729.
174. Philip Bassett, "Labour shows it means to do business with business," *Times,* 7 April 1995. The quotation is taken from a speech Tony Blair made on 1 April 1995.
175. *Beyond Capital,* 730.
176. Parliamentary votes are now considered a mere formality, if that. Vital issues are never even debated in Parliament. They are simply imposed on it with cynical manipulation, as the

"approval" of the Iraq War happened to be in Britain, under the false pretense that Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction were ready to be fired in 45 minutes," in Prime Minister Tony Blair's words. Moreover, it is well known that as a matter of routine the political decisions are not made even by the members of the cabinet—who only rubber-stamp them—but by less than a handful of people in the so-called "kitchen cabinets." And all this is done in the name of democratic parliamentary politics.

177. Rosa Luxemburg, "Organizational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy," in *The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism,* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1970, 98.
178. Rousseau, *The Social Contract,* 78.
179. Ibid., 79.
180. Discussed in chap. 14 of *Beyond Capital*.
181. Ibid.
182. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations,* ed. J. R. McCulloch, Adam and Charles Black, Edinburgh, 1863, 200.
183. Ibid., 273.
184. Lenin made it amply clear that *"political* revolutions can under no circumstances whatsoever either obscure or weaken the slogan of a *socialist* revolution . . . which should not be regarded as a *single act*, but as a *period* of turbulent political and economic upheavals, the most intense class struggle, civil war, revolutions and counterrevolutions." Lenin, "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe," *Collected Works,* vol. 21, 340.

    Whereas Lenin always retained his awareness of the fundamental difference between the political and the ongoing social revolution, Stalin, when he was irrevocably forced into defending the bare survival of the political revolution after the dying down of the revolutionary wave in Europe, obliterated this vital distinction, pretending that the unavoidable *first step* in the direction of the socialist transformation represented socialism itself, to be simply followed by stepping onto the "highest stage of Communism" in an encircled country.
185. As Marx puts it, in the course of so-called primitive accumulation capital emerges "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt." See Part VIII of Marx's *Capital,* vol. 1: "The So-Called Primitive Accumulation."
186. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* Harper Torchbooks, 457.
187. Marx, *Economic Manuscripts of 1861–63,* MECW, 34:457. Another important qualification that must be added here is that "productive labour—as value producing—always confronts capital as the labour of *isolated* workers, whatever social combinations those workers may enter into in the production process. Thus whereas capital represents the social productive power of labour toward the workers, productive labour always represents toward capital only the labour of the *isolated* worker." Ibid., 460. Marx's emphases.
188. Ibid., 456.
189. Ibid., 457.
190. The points made in the last paragraphs are more fully discussed in section 18.4 of *Beyond Capital:* "The Need to Counter Capital's Extra-Parliamentary Force." First published in Italian in the January–April 1982 issue of *Problemi del Socialismo,* a periodical founded by Lelio Basso, a towering figure of the left of Pietro Nenni's Socialist Party.
191. *Beyond Capital,* 146.
192. This chapter was originally a discussion paper drafted in 2010 after a long discussion with President Hugo Chávez and was written at his request.

193. Robert Cooper, "The New Liberal Imperialism," *Observer Worldview Extra,* April 7, 2002, http://theguardian.com. Emphases added in this chapter.
194. Ibid.
195. "Perpetual War for a Lasting Peace," Richard Peet's review of Thomas Barnett's book *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty First Century* in *Monthly Review* 58/8 (January 2005): 53–59.
196. Thomas M. Barnett, "Mr. President, Here's How to Make Sense of Our Iraq Strategy," *Esquire*, June 2004, 148–54, http://thomaspmbarnett.com.
197. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* in *Selected Works,* vol. 1, 37–40.
198. Marx to Engels, October 8, 1858, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence,* Progress Publisher, Moscow, 1975, 103–4.
199. Marx, *Value, Price and Profit,* an address delivered at the General Council of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) in June 1865, quoted from Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, 447.
200. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge, 1963), 466.
201. Marx to Engels, February 18, 1865, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, 153–55.
202. Ferdinand Lassalle, letter to Bismarck, June 8, 1863, http://marxists.org.
203. Engels, letter to August Bebel, March 18–28, 1875, in Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, 272–77.
204. This chapter is the text of a lecture delivered in Brazil in June 2011 at several universities. It was published by *Monthly Review* in 2012.
205. "Breaking the US Budget Impasse," *Financial Times*, June 1, 2011.
206. See my 2009 *Debate Socialista* interview, republished as"The Tasks Ahead," in *The Structural Crisis of Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 173–202.
207. This quotation is taken from section 18.2.1 of *Beyond Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), 680–82. First published in Italian in the January–April 1982 issue of *Problemi del Socialismo*.
208. Sartre's interview with the Italian Manifesto group was published as "Masses, Spontaneity, Party" in Ralph Milliband and John Saville, eds., *The Socialist Register, 1970* (London: Merlin Press, 1970), 245.
209. Ibid., 242
210. Ibid., 238–39.
211. The gravity of this problem can no longer be ignored. To realize its magnitude it is enough to quote a passage from an excellent book that offers a comprehensive account of the unfolding process of planetary destructiveness as a result of crossing some prohibitive thresholds and boundaries put into relief by environmental science: "These thresholds have in some cases already been crossed and in other cases will soon be crossed with the continuation of business as usual. Moreover, this can be attributed in each and every case to a primary cause: the current pattern of global socioeconomic development, that is, the capitalist mode of production and its expansionary tendencies. The whole problem can be called 'the global ecological rift,' referring to the overall break in the human relation to nature arising from an alienated system of capital accumulation without end. All of this suggests that the use of the term Anthropocene to describe a new geological epoch, displacing the Holocene, is both a description of a new burden falling on humanity and a recognition of an immense crisis—a potential terminal event in geological evolution that could destroy the world as we know it. On the one hand,

there has been a great acceleration of the human impact on the planetary system since the Industrial Revolution, and particularly since 1945—to the point that biogeochemical cycles, the atmosphere, the ocean, and the earth system as a whole, can no longer be seen as largely impervious to the human economy. On the other hand, the current course on which the world is headed could be described not so much as the appearance of a stable new geological epoch (the Anthropocene), as an end-Holocene, or more ominously, end-Quarternary, terminal event, which is a way of referring to the mass extinctions that often separate geological eras. Planetary boundaries and tipping points, leading to the irreversible degradation of the conditions of life on Earth, may soon be reached, science tells us, with a continuation of today's business as usual. The Anthropocene may be the shortest flicker in geological time, soon snuffed out." John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010), 18–19.

212. See my Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, "The Necessity of Social Control," delivered at the London School of Economics on January 26, 1971. Italics in the original. Reprinted in *Beyond Capital*, 872–97.
213. Sartre, op. cit., 239.
214. Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital,* 466.
215. István Mészáros, *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness*, vol. 2: *The Dialectic of Structure and History* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2011), 483.
216. This chapter is an expanded version of some lectures on the state delivered in November 2013 in Brazil at four universities. It is part of a forthcoming *Critique of the State.*
217. See in this respect the final pages of section 7.
218. See section 5 below in this respect.
219. See section 3 and 5 on this score.
220. See the discussion of these problems in section 7.
221. See the discussion of Hegel's approach in section 6.
222. See Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster, "The Plight of U.S. Workers," *Monthly Review* (January 2014): 1–22.
223. See the discussion of this problem in my Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture, "The Necessity of Social Control," op. cit. To quote here a relevant passage from section 7: "The reality of the different rates of exploitation and profit does not alter in the least the *fundamental law* itself; i.e., the growing *equalization* of the differential rates of exploitation as the *global trend* of development of world capital. . . . Let it now suffice to stress that 'total social capital' should not be confused with 'total national capital.' When the latter is being affected by a relative weakening of its position within the global system, it will inevitably try to compensate for its losses by increasing its *specific rate of exploitation* over against the labor force under its direct control—or else its competitive position is further weakened within the global framework of 'total social capital.' Under the system of capitalist social control there can be no way out from such 'short-term disturbances and dysfunctions' other than the *intensification of the specific rates of exploitation,* which can only lead, both locally and in global terms, to an explosive intensification of the fundamental social antagonism in the long run. Those who have been talking about the 'integration' of the working class—depicting 'organized capitalism' as a system which succeeded in radically mastering its social contradictions—have hopelessly misidentified the manipulative success of the differential rates of exploitation (which prevailed in the relatively 'disturbance-free' historic phase of postwar reconstruction and expansion) as

a basic *structural remedy*. As a matter of fact, it was nothing of the kind. The ever-increasing frequency with which 'temporary disturbances and dysfunctions' appear in all spheres of our social existence, and the utter failure of manipulative measures and instruments devised to cope with them, are clear evidence that the *structural crisis* of the capitalist mode of social control has assumed *all-embracing* proportions."

224. See section 4 of the present chapter on this issue.
225. See Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life: My Autobiography,* Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1998, 29.
226. Harold Macmillan also scathingly referred to Margaret Thatcher's privatization policies as "selling the family silver."
227. Even in its nineteenth-century origin this notion goes back to Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, the promoter of "One Nation Conservatism," who was created Earl of Beaconsfield by Queen Victoria in 1876.
228. Heath, op. cit., 169.
229. Ibid.
230. Paul Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1957, vii. See my discussion of these matters—including Roosevelt's ironical dismissal of Churchill's British Empire–retaining fantasies—in chap. 2, "The Potentially Deadliest Phase of Imperialism," in my book *Socialism or Barbarism: From the "American Century" to the Crossroads,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 2001, 23–56.
231. István Mészáros, *Marx's Theory of Alienation,* Merlin Press, London, 1970, 310.
232. See in this respect Hegel's sharp critique of English constitutionality and his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in numerous places.
233. See Marx's letter to Engels, 8 October 1858.
234. See my discussion of these problems, with particular reference to Bismarck's role in defeating the Paris Commune, in my article on "Reflections on the New International" In the present volume.
235. Marx, letter to Engels, 18 February 1865.
236. Engels, letter to August Bebel, 18–28 March 1875.
237. István Mészáros, chap. 13, "How Could the State Wither Away?," *Beyond Capital,* 491.
238. Norberto Bobbio, "Is There a Marxist Theory of the State?," *Telos* (Spring 1978): 11.
239. Published by Einaudi in Torino, in 1976.
240. At times he even admits that "I have no precise answer at all to this question." Bobbio, *Quale Socialismo?,* 106.
241. See Norberto Bobbio, *Da Hobbes a Marx,* Morano Editore, Napoli 1965. In another important article on "Studi Hegeliani" contained in the same volume of essays (165–238), first published in *Belfagor* in 1950, Bobbio's attitude is rather more negative in relation to a dialectical conception of history, suggesting that in Marx's "philosophy of history" we find a Hegelian eschatological *closure* of history (211), when in fact Marx contrasts "humanity's *prehistory"* with the beginning of *"real history"* as a result of the radical emancipatory transformation of society at present dominated by alienation.
242. Bobbio, *Da Hobbes a Marx,* 251.
243. Ibid., 263.
244. "Anyone who has read the writers in the liberal tradition from Locke to Spencer, or the great Italian liberals from Cattaneo to Einaudi, knows that their main preoccupation has always

been to restrain the state, to save civil society (in the Marxian sense) from excessive interference." Bobbio, "Is There a Marxist Theory of the State?," 10–11.

245. Published in England in 2005 by Allen Lane/Penguin Press.
246. Ibid., 230–31.
247. Ibid., xix.
248. See in this respect Lukács's analysis of Weber's own acceptance of dictatorial repression even to the point of his full agreement with proto-fascist General Ludendorff's views on "the leader." General Ludendorff, Marshal Hindenburg's chief of staff in the First World War, was one of Hitler's earliest supporters in the German military hierarchy. I discussed this matter on pages 433–34 of my book *The Social Determination of Method,* vol. 1: *Social Structure and Forms of Consciousness.*
249. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* 222.
250. Introduction to Otto Gierke, *Natural Law and the Theory of Society 1500 to 1800,* Beacon Press, Boston, 1957, xxiii.
251. Ibid., xxviii.
252. Ibid., lxxxvii.
253. Nothing could be more *Sollen*-like than that, although Hegel sharply objected to the Kantian "ought-to-be," just as he censured Kant for using his "faculty-bag" (Hegel's depreciatory expression) to find solutions in it when he needed them. This Hegel did even if on occasions he committed the same sin himself, as for instance when he dismissed the demands for *equality* as "the *folly of the understanding*," in tune with his own "faculty bag," contrasting the "higher faculty of reason" to the lower faculty of understanding. See Hegel's discussion of equality, nature, and "ought-to-be" in *The Philosophy of Right,* 130.
254. Hegel , *The Philosophy of History,* 15.
255. Ibid., 17.
256. John Austin, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined* and *The Uses of the Study of Jurisprudence,* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1965, 287–88.
257. Ibid., 288.
258. Ibid.
259. Ibid., 285.
260. Ibid., 390. It is very doubtful that the less progressive Austin had the same concern about "sinister interest," when he spoke about it in the plural, as Jeremy Bentham, the term's originator. For Bentham used it in 1822 in scathing condemnation of Alexander Wedderburn who, in addition to his manifold social privileges, was also rewarded with the near astronomic sum of £15,000 a year as attorney general and, more than that, received later the annual remuneration of £25,000 as lord chancellor, with the power of veto on all justice in the latter capacity. See Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morality and Legislation,* Athlone Press, London, 1970, 15. This fundamental work was first printed in 1780, amended in 1789, and complemented by Bentham with the "greatest happiness or greatest felicity principle" in 1822.
261. Ibid., 307. The words "powers" and "duties" are italicized by Jeremy Bentham.
262. Ibid., 294–95.
263. Ibid., 296.
264. Austin, op. cit., 366–67. Italics by Austin.
265. Ibid., 269.
266. Ibid., 273.

267. Ibid., 194–95. Austin's italics.
268. Bentham, op. cit., 74.
269. Ibid.
270. Ibid., 12.
271. Ibid., 13.
272. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* 12–13.
273. "The rational, the divine, possesses the absolute power to actualize itself and has, *right from the beginning*, fulfilled itself: it is not so impotent that it would have to wait for the beginning to its actualization." Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind,* 62.
274. See in this respect Lukács's great book, *The Young Hegel,* written in Moscow in the late 1930s as a forceful refutation of the dogmatic Stalinist line which, turning the truth upside down, condemned Hegel as a "conservative reaction against the French Revolution." It was first published in German in 1948 in Austria, and in English in 1973, in London. In Austria it was published with the help and active contribution by Wilhelm Szilasi, who was designated by Husserl himself as the successor to his University Chair of Philosophy, and later sacked by the Nazi Heidegger.
275. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* 212.
276. Ibid., 213.
277. Ibid., section 324.
278. See Bentham and Austin, discussed in section 5.
279. On the deeply interrelated social/economic and political/military grounds of these developments, see Harry Magdoff's seminal book, *The Age of Imperialism: The Economics of US Foreign Policy,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 1966. See also a fine collection of Harry Magdoff's essays: *Imperialism without Colonies,* edited by John Bellamy Foster, published ten years ago by Monthly Review Press, New York, on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday. Thus, Magdoff would be one hundred this year. The best way to honor him on the centenary of his birth is to make the teaching of his most essential writings on modern imperialism our own.
280. As we have seen above, he forcefully stressed that "the *rational,* the *divine,* possesses the absolute power to actualize itself and has, *right from the beginning*, fulfilled itself."
281. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* 217.
282. Ibid., 218.
283. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* 103.
284. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* 222–23.
285. Friedrich Schlegel, *The Philosophy of Life, and Philosophy of Language, in a Course of Lectures,* George Bell & Sons, London, 116.
286. Ibid., 114, 140, 163, 186.
287. Ibid., 328–29.
288. See Philippe Buonarroti, *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf,* Brussels, 1828, 297.
289. "Under the name of politics, chaos has reigned for too many centuries . . . equality was nothing but a beautiful and sterile legal fiction. . . . From time immemorial they hypocritically repeat, *all men are equal;* and from time immemorial the most degrading and monstrous inequality insolently weighs upon the human race. . . . We need not only that equality of rights written into the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; we want it in our midst, under the roofs of our houses. . . . We declare that we can no longer put up with the fact that the great majority work and sweat for the smallest of minorities. . . . Let it at last end, this great

scandal that our descendants will never believe existed! Disappear at last, revolting distinctions between rich and poor, great and small, masters and servants, *rulers* and *ruled*. . . . The aristocratic charters of 1791 and 1795 tightened your chains instead of breaking them. That of 1793 was a great step toward true equality, and we had never before approached it so closely. But it did not yet touch the goal, nor reach common happiness, which it nevertheless solemnly consecrated as its great principle." (All of these passages are taken from Buonarroti's work, cited in prior note.)

290. Simón Bolívar, *Selected Works,* Colonial Press, New York, 1951, vol. 2, 603.
291. Ibid., vol. 1, 195.
292. Anonymous pamphlet of 1821, *The Source and Remedy of the National Difficulties, deduced from principles of political economy in a letter to Lord John Russell,* quoted on 397 of Marx's *Grundrisse.*
293. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* 15.
294. Ibid., 17.
295. Ibid., 212.
296. Ibid., 211.
297. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 105.
298. Ibid., p, 106.
299. See a more detailed discussion of these crucial problems in sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 of my book *The Dialectic of Structure and History*.
300. See my discussion of Robert Cooper's views on "liberal imperialism" and the "failed states"—describing the former colonial territories to be conquered again—in my book *The Challenge and Burden of Historical Time,* Monthly Review Press, New York, 2008, 418–22; originally published in Brazil in 2007. Cooper was called by the *Observer Magazine*, which promoted his ideas, "Tony Blair's Guru."

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